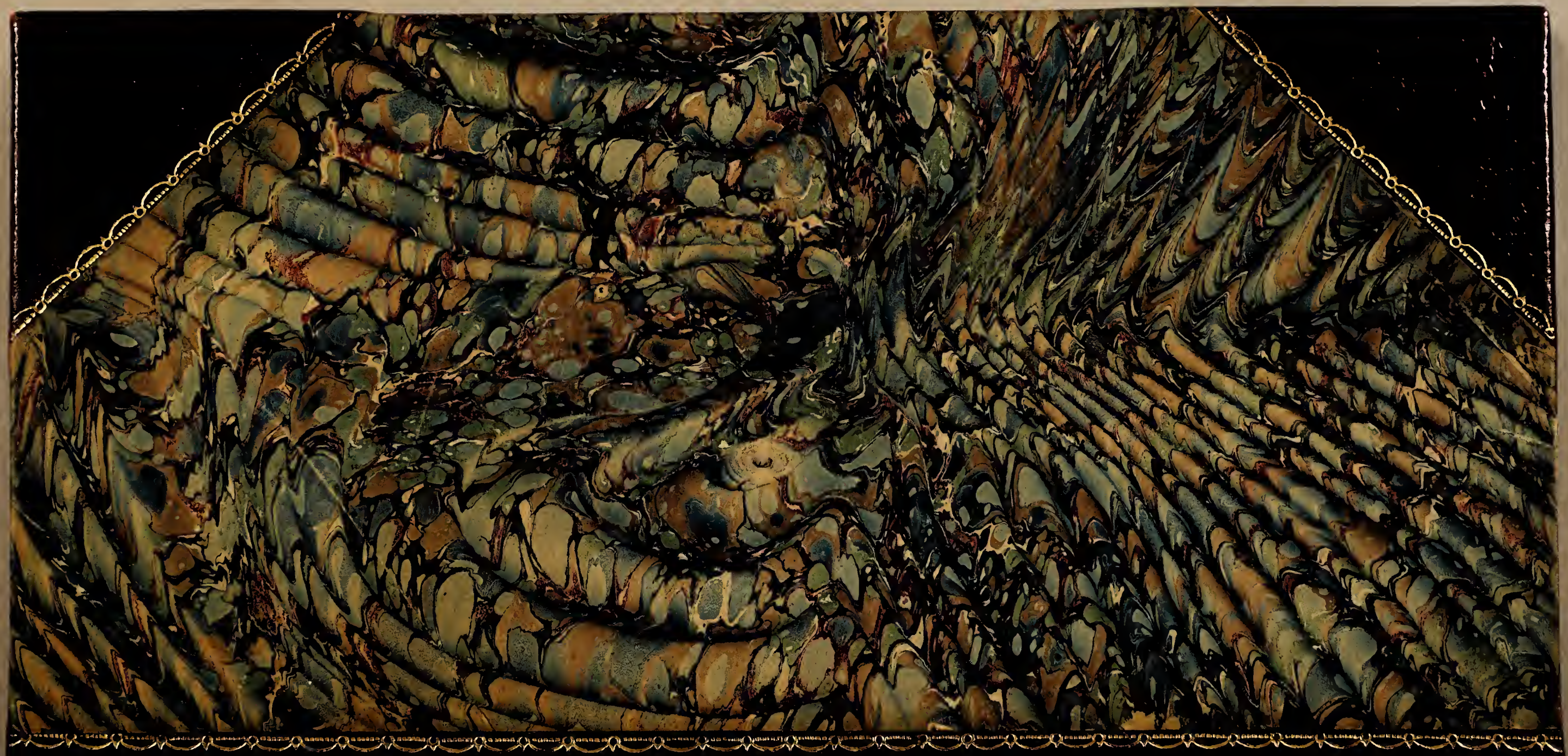

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CHRISTIANITY

THE TRUE

THEOLOGY.

CHRISTIANITY

THE TRUE

THEOLOGY,

AND

ONLY PERFECT MORAL SYSTEM;

IN ANSWER TO

"THE AGE OF REASON:"

WITH AN

APPENDIX,

IN ANSWER TO

"THE EXAMINERS EXAMINED:"

BY *WILLIAM PATTEN*, A. M.
MINISTER OF THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN NEWPORT.

WARREN (RHODE-ISLAND):
PRINTED BY NATHANIEL PHILLIPS,
M,DCC,XCV.

District of Rhode-Island, to wit:

L.S.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the ninth day of May, in the nineteenth year of the independence of the United States of America, Rev. WILLIAM PATTEN, of the said district, hath deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the Right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, to wit: "Christianity the true Theology, and only perfect moral System; in Answer to the 'Age of Reason;' with an Appendix, in Answer to the 'Examiners Examined:' by WILLIAM PATTEN, A. M. Minister of the second Congregational Church in Newport," in conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entituled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned."

EDMUND T. ELLERY, Clerk of the
District Court of Rhode-Island.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE profeſſion of the Author he is apprehenſive may be made an objection to his repreſentions and arguments in the following treatiſe. But if a profeſſor, or miniſter of the Goſpel, may not write in favor of chriſtianity, a deiſt muſt not write in favor of deiſm. If the faith of a perſon render his arguments ſuſpicious, the objection will apply, with equal force, to different denominations of character, and chriſtianity and deiſm can be impartially diſcuſſed, only by thoſe who believe in neither.

If chriſtianity be true, a perſon may profeſs it, not from prejudice; but conviction, and be a miniſter of it from a ſenſe of duty. To ſay that the perſon who does profeſs and preach it, muſt be influenced by prejudice, or ſiniſter motives, is taking for granted that chriſtianity is falſe—the very ſubject of diſpute.

The opinions exhibited in the "Age of Reaſon," did not originate with the author of that piece: the greater part of them have been mentioned by preceding writers, and received particular anſwers from believers in divine Revelation. They might not have been learned by him from any of thoſe writers, for they naturally occur to a perſon on rejecting Revelation: they might, therefore, occur to him—and he mentions, that from thoughts bolting into his mind, "he *has acquired almoſt all the knowledge* he *has.*" *As they are exhibited in a new form, and connected with new objections, they require again to be conſidered.*

Several pamphlets have already been publiſhed, either with a plain reference to the "Age of Reaſon," or as expreſs anſwers to it. From another being added to the collection, no argument can be drawn in favor of the merit of that performance. Great evils ſometimes require great and general attention. If this be flattering to the author of the "Age of Reaſon," he has a right to conclude that his work is of importance.

It

It is much to be regreted, that one who has written ſo well on ſeveral political points, ſhould not have thought with more juſtice on religion. But on this ſubject how could he think with juſtice, ſeeing, as he informs us, he abandoned chriſtianity when a child, *from the* abſurdity *and* cruelty *of the* doctrine of redemption by the death of Chriſt, *as repreſented in a ſermon read in the family—not conſidering, if he were a* child *he might not underſtand the doctrine. He has grown up with prejudices againſt the chriſtian Religion: ſuch prejudices as have induced him to neglect eccleſiaſtical writers, and the ſtudy even of the Bible.*

In committing his performance to the patronage of the people of this country, he little ſuſpected the enlighted views with which many would look with pity on his ignorance, and with abhorrence on his wrong and impious repreſentations. But ſome are incautious, and their eſteem for the author as befriending the civil rights of mankind, eſpecially of this country, may betray them into an approbation of his opinions generally, and thus

give

give to gratitude and friendſhip, an advantage over truth and virtue.

To counteract this influence, and diſtinguiſh the moſt intereſting truths from the groſſeſt abuſe, is an object worthy of a much better writer than now appears before the public, and cannot be unworthy the attention of any reader.—Impartially conſidered it will plainly appear, that the author of the "Age of Reaſon" is erroneous and inconſiſtent—that his aſſertions have little other ſupport than the perſuaſion of an ignorant and perverſe mind, oppoſed to facts well atteſted, conſiſtent and divine—that in almoſt every reſpect he is full of prejudice, and under forms of philoſophic eaſe and pleaſantry, ſtill ſhows a temper peculiarly inimical to the chriſtian ſcheme, and is in this ſenſe a mere tarantula. *While with humility we take the goſpel lyre, may the harmony and influence of its ſacred doctrines be felt, and recover ſome, who even ſleep under his envenomed* bite, *from madneſs and deſtruction.*

THE AUTHOR.

CHRISTIANITY

THE TRUE

THEOLOGY, &c.

CIVIL liberty, though a great bleſſing, is not the perfection of the human ſtate. After mankind have become free, it is neceſſary that they know in what manner they may acceptably ſerve GOD, and promote their mutual welfare.

The neceſſity of theological and moral principles appears to have been conſidered by *Thomas Paine*, and was, by his account, an inducement with him to publiſh his thoughts on Religion. But in rejecting Chriſtianity, as he rejected the only perfect ſyſtem of moral and religious truth, he cannot claim a pure motive

for

for reflections diſhonorary to God, and injurious to his fellow-men.

Some perſons have thought his treatiſe too contemptible to deſerve an anſwer. All errors are contemptible in theory; but that error is not contemptible in influence, which may deceive many, or has really deceived one:—and but little acquainted with the ſtate of ſociety is the perſon, who has not often obſerved the *progreſs* of error from that neglect which reſulted from the contempt of it.

In examining the opinions expreſſed in the "Age of Reaſon," and the nature and truth of the Goſpel, the reader is requeſted to give a ſtrict and impartial attention. Error admits of ſuperficial views and reſults from blindneſs; but truth implies the exerciſe of reflection, and its diſtinctions and relations, however obvious in themſelves, cannot at firſt be marked but in the habit of abſtruſe employment. Error likewiſe admits of prejudice: whereas truth requires an impartial temper. Without this a perſon will not acknowledge it: or if conſtrained to

acknowledge

acknowledge, will not approve; but oppoſe from hatred what he cannot refute by argument or obſcure by ſophiſtry. For theſe reaſons the reader is requeſted to exerciſe patience and impartiality, and ſuch a reader the author ſhall be happy to attend in the following diſcuſſions.

SECTION I.

PAINE'S *inconſiſtencies.*

IT is proper, before we conſider his objections to the Goſpel and his opinions, to notice a number of inconſiſtencies in his performance, not only as they will ſhow his inattention, and the influence of prejudice over reaſon and judgment; but as a conſideration of them in the courſe of our arguments might be an interruption, and at the concluſion of them might be trifling.

1. The repreſentation given by him of ſcience, is not conſiſtent with the reaſon aſſigned for a plurality of worlds, ſo as to account for their exiſtence.

He

He conſiders a triangle the chief principle, or part of ſcience—ſays, "It is the ſoul of ſcience, and the extent of its uſes, are not known "—that applied to the ſtudy the heavenly bod-"ies, it is called aſtronomy—applied to direct "the courſe of a ſhip on the ocean, it is called "navigation—or applied to the conſtruction "of plans, of edifices, it is called architecture." Pages 79, 80.

Yet he remarks, "We ſhall ſee, perhaps, the "true reaſon, at leaſt a very good one for our "happineſs, why the Creator, inſtead of mak-"ing one immenſe world, has preferred divid-"ing that quantity of matter into ſeveral diſ-"tinct and ſeparate worlds—that all our "knowledge of ſcience is derived from the re-"volutions which thoſe ſeveral planets, or "worlds, of which our ſyſtem is compoſed, "make in their circuit round the ſun"—and he inquires, "Of what uſe is it unleſs it be "to teach man ſomething, that his eye is en-"dowed with the power of beholding, to an "incomprehenſible diſtance, an immenſity of

"worlds,

" worlds, revolving in the ocean of ſpace ?—
" It is only by contemplating what he calls the
" ſtarry heavens, as the book and ſchool of ſci-
" ence, that he diſcovers any uſe in their being
" viſible to him."—Pages 114, 122, 86, 87.

If all ſcience depend on the properties of a triangle, and thoſe properties be unfolded in navigation, and architecture, as well as in aſtronomy, then our knowledge of ſcience is not particularly derived from an acquaintance with the planetary ſyſtem ; but we have the ſame knowledge from navigation and architecture ; and there cannot be a plainer contradiction, than in aſſerting, that a triangle, " applied to " direct the courſe of a ſhip on the ocean is call- " ed navigation," and " that all our knowledge " of ſcience is derived from the revolutions " whcih thoſe ſeveral planets," &c.

We may further obſerve, that the properties of a triangle are not illuſtrated to us from any of the heavenly bodies, excepting thoſe which belong to our ſolar ſyſtem. The fixed ſtars have no *parallax*, can neither be meaſur-

ed, nor located. It is, therefore, abſurd and frivolous to aſſign, as perhaps the true reaſon for the creation of a plurality of worlds, the illuſtration of the properties of a triangle, when its properties are illuſtrated in the ocean as fully as in the revolutions of the planets, and when even a pair of *ſteel-yards* can give us more inſtruction in this reſpect, than all the ſtellary ſyſtems.

It is not our intention to argue againſt the exiſtence of a plurality of worlds. From what circumſtance *Paine* has thought it diſcredited in the ſcriptures, or invidious to chriſtians, it will be difficult to determine. The ſtory of the perſecution of the ſciences, and the conjecture that *Newton*, had he lived in an earlier age, would have fallen a ſacrifice to *chriſtianity*, do not contemplate the truths, that Newton was a chriſtian, and that the ſciences have been inveſtigated chiefly by perſons of this character. The conjecture is, therefore, founded in miſapprehenſion. Chriſtianity is oppoſed only to *deiſm* in the ſciences. A belief of the

goſpel

goſpel may well conſiſt with the belief of a plurality of worlds, provided they be not made the foundation of religion*.

2. He is inconſiſtent in ſuppoſing it impoſſible that the truths of ſcripture ſhould be communicated to all nations, while he conſiders himſelf as writing to all nations.

He ſays (page 7) "I am well aware of the "difficulties attending the ſubject (publiſhing "his thoughts on religion) and had reſerved it "to a more advanced period of my life. I "intended it to be the laſt offering I ſhould "make to my fellow-citizens of *all nations*:" Yet he ſays (pages 64, 65) "How was Je-

"ſus

* As Mr. Paine has been very particular on the ſcience of aſtronomy, and the principles of a triangle, it may be proper to add, that he is not philoſophical in the importance he has given to a TRIANGLE. There is no reaſon for rejecting the common opinion of the ſchools, that a POINT, or UNIT, is the firſt and moſt important part of ſcience. It is evident that a point, carried forward, makes a line, and that lines compoſe a triangle. So that a triangle depends upon a point.

All multitude begins and ends in UNITY. The largeſt imaginable collection of numbers with ONE, and the collection forms one whole. All operations commence in unity, and if conſiſtent may be reduced to it. So that an UNIT, or point, is the ſoul of ſcience: is the principle of action, of order and beauty: is the commencement and perfection of every thing—even of the TRIANGLE itſelf.

" ſus Chriſt to make any thing known to all
" nations ? He could ſpeak but one language,
" which was the Hebrew—and there are in the
" world ſeveral hundred languages.—As to
" tranſlations, every one who knows any thing
" of languages, knows that it is impoſſible to
" tranſlate from one language into another, not
" only without loſing a great part of the ori-
" ginal ; but frequently *of* miſtaking the ſenſe.
" And beſides all this, the art of printing was
" wholly unknown at the time Chriſt lived."

Allowing that Chriſt underſtood but one language, Hebrew, or any other, might not tranſlations be made of his doctrines, as well as of the opinions of *Thomas Paine*, who has written in but one language, and confeſſes that he knows but one ? If the art of printing was wanting in the time of Chriſt, there were other ways of communicating information. In addition to which, the goſpel was known by Chriſt to continue through all ages, and therefore to enjoy the advantage of every other method of inſtruction.—It doubtleſs will be

publiſhed to all the world, however ſtrong Mr. *Paine* may be in opinion, that his treatiſe will appear in all languages, and induce his fellow-citizens to reject it.

3. As connected with this inconſiſtence we may obſerve his aſſerting, that the dead languages cannot be underſtood, and yet that the ſtudy of them is uſeleſs, becauſe the books written in them are tranſlated.

His words are (page 89) "As there is noth-"ing new to be learned from the dead lan-"guages, all the uſeful books being already "tranſlated, the languages are become uſe-"leſs."—Yet (page 65) "As to tranſlations, "every one who knows any thing of languag-"es, knows that it is impoſſible to tranſlate "from one language into another, not only "without loſing a great part of the original, "but frequently of miſtaking the ſenſe"—again (page 90, note) "The beſt Greek lin-"guiſt, that now exiſts, does not underſtand "Greek ſo well as a Grecian plowman did, or

" a Grecian milk-maid : and the ſame for the " Latin, compared with a plowman, or milk-" maid of the Romans."

When it anſwers his purpoſes for the dead languages to be underſtood by the moderns, they are ſufficiently underſtood ; but when he chooſes to argue on their being unknown, they are covered with obſcurity. In the former opinion he was doubtleſs juſt : for no perſon of information can imagine, that a Grecian plowman underſtood the merit of the ſtyle of Demoſthenes, equally with Mounteney : or the ſublimity of Homer equally with Clarke : or that a Roman plowman, or milk-maid, underſtood the merit of the orations of Cicero, equally with Middleton : or the beauty of the deſcriptions of Virgil equally with ſeveral who have tranſlated the Æneiad.

With the pronunciation of the languages the moderns are not acquainted ; but they underſtand the meaning of them, and the propriety and beauties of ſtyle, and it is abſurd to ſay, with all theſe advantages, that thoſe languages

were

were underſtood by the vulgar who ſpoke them, better than by the learned among the moderns.

As to the impoſſibility of juſt tranſlations, every language has its idioms and beauties, which cannot be transfered; but theſe relate to taſte, and not to truth. The truths expreſſed in any language may be tranſlated.

4. He is inconſiſtent in conſidering the teſtimony of the Jews as having ſome weight againſt the goſpel, and yet not allowing it to have any weight in favor of the law.

He condemns the writings of Moſes and the prophets, without conſidering the teſtimony of the Iſraelites as any thing in their favor, and yet, in writing of the goſpel, he mentions the Jews as the beſt ſurviving evidence, "who ſay it is falſe." Were not the Jews intereſted to reject the goſpel, as much as to ſupport the law? Are they not as good a ſurviving evidence in favor of the law, as againſt the goſpel? Why then is their teſtimony omitted in one caſe, and not in the other? Are witneſſes to be credited, only when intereſted againſt the goſpel?

He

5. He is inconſiſtent in crediting the account given of Jeſus Chriſt, ſo far as it concerns his moral character and doctrines, and yet charging, as a forgery, all thoſe parts which refer to his character as a divine perſon, and the true Meſſiah.

He ſays, that he was "a virtuous and an ami-
"able man: that the morality he preached and
"practiſed was of the moſt benevolent kind—
"that he preached the equality of men, and a-
"gainſt the corruptions and avarice of the Jew-
"iſh prieſts—that he was accuſed by the prieſts
"of ſedition and conſpiracy againſt the Roman
"government, and between the two, that this
"virtuous reformer and revolutioniſt loſt his
"life." Pages 18, 22, 23.

Yet he ſtiles the other part of the account, a "wretched contrivance:" ſays, "it has ev-
"ery mark of fraud, and impoſition ſtampt
"on the face of it"—and *on the plain narrative of facts he has given together with another cauſe* (the heathen account of the giants confined

under

under mount Etna) *the chriſtian mythologiſts have founded their fable.* Page 23.

The Goſpel is ſo connected with the character of Jeſus Chriſt, that whether true, or falſe, there is equal reaſon to conclude that he was concerned in it. If he were only man, he might adopt it, as well as his diſciples ſay that he adopted it. The moral doctrines he taught cannot, on this ſuppoſition, ſecure him from the charge, for his diſciples taught the ſame moral doctrines, and muſt, therefore, be equally ſecured from the imputation of having forged the account. Or if they miſrepreſented the miraculous part, they might alſo miſrepreſent the moral part of his character, and ſtill leave it probable that he was concerned in the goſpel.

The abſurdity of *Paine* in this part of his work is the more ſtriking, as the doctrines of Chriſt and cauſes of his ſufferings are known only from his followers. It was the diſpenſation of heaven, that the firſt diſciples of Chriſt, ſhould be his hiſtorians, and to them is the world indebted for any knowledge of his doc-

trines

trines as moral, or his character as examplary*. How inconsistently, therefore, does *Paine* assert, that a person brought into view only by the evangelists, was really a virtuous and amiable man; but that he had no concern in a system which they said they learned from him! There is something cruel in separating the disciples from their master, and for arrogance and impiety, as well as absurdity, this passage cannot well be exceeded.

To say, that "the miraculous part has every mark of fraud and imposition"—is assuming the subject in question, and subversive of reason. It is a rule to judge of facts by witnesses, and not of witnesses by facts, unless an evident contradiction, or impossibility be asserted. If the character of Christ be not impossible, to say that his disciples have given a false account of it, is denying their testimony, without weakening its credibility—and the possibility of the character, will still engage the impartial mind

to

* Josephus relates none of the doctrines of Christ—neither does Pliny, nor Tacitus, nor any Jewish or heathen writers within a century of the christian æra.

to conſider them honeſt men, and their teſtimony juſt.

6. He ſays (page 19) "Jeſus Chriſt wrote "no account of himſelf. "Not a line of what "is called the New Teſtament, is of his writing"—and (page 48) "Had it been the object, "or the intention of Jeſus Chriſt, to eſtabliſh "a new religion, he would, undoubtedly have "written the hiſtory himſelf: or procured it to "be written in his life time; but all the books "called the New Teſtament, were written af-"ter his death."

A number of remarks, inconſiſtent with the preceding, are ſummed up in the following concluſion (page 59) "Since, then, no exter-"nal evidence can be produced to prove, "whether the Church fabricated the doctrine "of redemption, or not *(for ſuch evidence, whe-"ther for, or againſt, would be ſubject to the "ſame ſuſpicion of being fabricated)* the caſe "can only be referred to the internal evidence."

On ſuppoſition that the doctrine of redemption was not fabricated; but is genuine, if at

this

this long diſtance of time no external evidence could be produced to prove that it is genuine, ſeeing ſuch evidence whether for, or againſt, would be liable to the ſame ſuſpicion of being fabricated, then how unreaſonably does *Paine* object to the character of Chriſt, that *he wrote no account of himſelf*, for had the whole goſpel been written by him, there would have been the ſame diſtance of time, and it could not be proved to have been written by him, ſince the evidence, whether for, or againſt, would be ſubject to the ſame ſuſpicion of being fabricated, with the writings they might be adduced to ſupport.

Other inconſiſtences might be pointed out, but being connected with the ſubjects of the following ſections, they will be conſidered in the order aſſigned to our remarks.

SECTION II.

Divine Revelation.

DIVINE Revelation is a communication of divine truth from GOD to men. *Paine* aſſerts

asserts that it is something communicated *immediately*: If by the word, immediately, he meant *without any medium*, which appears to have been his meaning, are we to understand, without any medium on the part of God, such as words, or signs? Or without any medium on the part of our souls, and deny the instrumentality of the senses, such as hearing, or seeing? He cannot insist on the word in either of these senses, for he allows both of them in the following expression (page 63) "Are we to "have no word of God, no Revelation? I an- "swer yes: there is a word of God, there is a "*Revelation.* The word of God is the *creation* "we *behold.*" Here *creation* is mentioned, as a medium on the part of God, and the word, *behold*, implies the medium of sight on our part: so that Revelation is simply a communication of divine truth from God to men.

There may be a *medium* of communication. The medium may be varied, but in no instance does it constitute a part of the Revelation. A truth may be communicated in the sun; yet

the ſun is not the Revelation: and a truth may be communicated by a plant, an animal, or by a man, and neither of thoſe *media* be the Revelation.

The following remarks, therefore, are altogether groundleſs (page 13) "Admiting that "ſomething has been revealed to a certain per-"ſon, when he tells it to a ſecond perſon, a ſe-"cond to a third, a third to a fourth, and ſo on, "it ceaſes to be a revelation to all thoſe perſons. "It is revelation to the firſt perſon only, and "*hearſay* to every other." The mode of Revelation is changed, when declared by one man to another; but the Revelation is the ſame, provided the ſame truth be expreſſed.

Language may be a medium of revelation, becauſe it is a medium of inſtruction: is the ſign of all our ideas and feelings, and the higheſt mode of converſe among men. To deny that the Divine Being may employ it as a medium of communicating his will, is denying him the uſe of one of his eſtabliſhments, and from the importance of this eſtabliſhment, we

may

may preclude the knowledge of truths which peculiarly concern his glory and our happineſs.

Language is a medium of theological and moral truth, as well as of other branches of knowledge. If the will of God be expreſſed in one language, tranſlations may be made of it, and in every language it will be a divine revelation. To ſay that tranſlations are not a revelation equally with the original, implies that language is more than a medium, and is itſelf revelation. But to have language ſupernaturally communicated is not revelation; it is a miraculous gift, and revelation may be neceſſary to explain it. If language be only a medium, every tranſlation of a language in which the divine will is expreſſed, is equally an expreſſion of that will with the original—equally a Revelation, and the original has the preference only as the ſtandard to which tranſlations muſt be referred.

The changes and idioms of language are never conſidered detrimental to truth. Language is not ſubject to ſuch changes as that

truth

truth is loſt ; and though the idioms and beauties of language cannot, in ſome caſes, be tranſferred ; yet truths may be tranſlated. Moral, or religious truths cannot depend on idioms and ſtyle : and an appeal may be made to common underſtanding, whether the peculiar truths of the goſpel may not be expreſſed in all languages, and communicated to all nations.

Paine is not conſiſtent in ſuppoſing that moral and theological truths cannot be conveyed in language, for he has undertaken in this method to communicate ſuch truths to his fellow-citizens of all nations. From this circumſtance it is apparent, that his objection to divine Revelation refers to the doctrines which are ſaid to come from GOD, and not to the mode of their being communicated.

Wiſe men among the heathen have thought a Revelation in language of importance. This was the opinion of Socrates, Cicero and others. It has, indeed, been the general ſenſe of mankind, for in all ages they have followed revelations, either real, or pretended.

The

The human mind, unleſs in caſes of ſingular depravity, is impelled to inquiries which obſervations on nature do not fully reſolve: it feels an intereſt in ſcenes to which the light of nature does not extend; it has, therefore, ſought for an explanation of them in ſome other way, and with perfect reaſon has approved an expreſſion of them in language.

More is not meant by a Revelation in language, than the purpoſes of language will anſwer. Language has no inherent power to communicate truth: it is only a medium of communication. In this reſpect the Scriptures are like nature. The perſon who beholds the ſun is not neceſſarily convinced of the exiſtence of GOD, or inſtructed in moral truth; but many behold the ſun without ſuch a conviction, or any pious, or moral reflections: and the perſon who reads the ſcripture does not neceſſarily perceive the character of GOD as there repreſented, or the nature of his requirements; but many read the ſcriptures deſtitute of inſtruction in theſe reſpects. Yet as the charac-

ter of GOD is continually exhibited in his works, ſo it is continually expreſſed in his word, and by the perſon of an honeſt heart it will be perceived.

The difference between a believer and an infidel* conſiſts in their affections. Every perſon who has the Scriptures has a divine Revelation. Plain expreſſions of the divine character and will are before him, and the merit of them is unknown, only ſo far as the heart is depraved. The perſon who becomes a chriſtian has his prejudices againſt thoſe repreſentations removed, and when in heart he approves of them, he finds a very great change in his experience; yet this change refers to the underſtanding only as that is influenced by the affections

* The Author is not ſtudious to avoid the word INFIDEL. PAINE in ſpeaking of the ſciences ſays, "Man cannot make "principles: he can only diſcover them—a triangle when "drawn, is no other than the image of the principle, which "previouſly exiſted, and would otherwiſe be imperceptible." With the ſame juſtice it may be ſaid, man does not make MORAL TRUTH. This exiſts in an abſtract ſenſe, and is diſcovered, but not created, being eternal and unchangable. For this reaſon it is the ſtandard of opinion, and to deviate from it may be ſtiled INFIDELITY, with the ſame propriety that deviating from the true principles of ſcience is ſtiled ignorance.

fections. A new revelation is not neceſſary. Changing the heart is not revelation; but an exertion of power and grace. Yet the change is an *immediate* effect of that power and grace, and in this ſenſe the truths of ſcripture are communicated immediately from God—their excellence is not percieved while the heart indulges prejudice, or is filled with enmity.

Theſe remarks have reſpect to Mr. *Paine*'s principal objections to the ſubject, and are of importance in conſidering Revelation.

SECTION III.

Authenticity of the writings of Moſes.

COULD it be proved that God did not manifeſt his preſence on Mount Sinai, and deliver his law to Moſes, the whole book of Scripture might be rejected, not only as the general ſubjects of it are connected with the writings of Moſes; but as teſtimonies found inſufficient in the caſe of his writings muſt fail of giving ſupport in caſes of a ſimilar nature.

Two

Two objections have been made to the writings of Moſes, firſt, that he did not write what is ſaid to be his; and ſecondly, if he did write it, that he did not receive from God what he delivered.

1ſt. It hath been queſtioned whether Moſes wrote the books, ſaid to be his; and whether the books in general, of ſcripture, be not falſly aſcribed to the perſons whoſe names they bear. The anſwer of the queſtion as it relates to Moſes may be anſwer of it in the other caſes, as the books of Moſes, from their antiquity, are the moſt liable to an exception of this nature.

The internal evidence that the Pentateuch was written by Moſes will be explained under the next particular: in this we have to conſider only the external teſtimony.

The ſeveral books of the Pentateuch were written by Moſes, becauſe they bear his name, and are attributed to him, and there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe they were written by any other perſon. Why do we believe that Homer was a Poet, and Demoſthenes an orator? Have we not ſufficient evidence of it in the poems and

orations.

orations which bear their reſpective names; and can any other evidence be expected? Yet we have the ſame proof that the Pentateuch was written by Moſes—the books bear his name, and there is a continued tradition of writers from the time neareſt to Moſes, down to our own, that they were written by him.

Among other authors by whom Moſes is mentioned, as the Lawgiver of the Jews, or the writer of the Pentateuch, Manetho from Joſephus may be cited. Or if this be an intereſted witneſs, we may adduce Juvenal, Pliny and Longinus. Indeed, till within a few years, the authenticity of the Pentateuch in this reſpect, has not been queſtioned. R. Aben Ezra*, though a late writer, is the firſt who has ſuggeſted doubts of its being written by Moſes; yet he ſuppoſed that the laws ſhould be attributed to him.

The books of Moſes have all that ſupport from tradition which the nature of the caſe requires

* See Du Pin, Vol. 1. 6.—As an authority for this author and a variety of writers in FAVOR of the Pentateuch.

quires, and more than is to be found in any other inſtance; and it may with the ſame propriety be denied that Moſes exiſted, as that the books ſaid to be his were written by him. Should *Paine* aſſert there never was ſuch a man, or *that he was not an Iſraelite*: or that there never were ſuch men as Homer and Demoſthenes, and require proof to the contrary, in what manner would it be poſſible to ſatisfy him? Writers which might be adduced as teſtimonies, he has ſaid are queſtionable: and the demand of proof is abſurd, as he does not allow that kind of evidence by which paſt events are confirmed; but requires preſent witneſſes to things formerly in exiſtence.

2. If the Pentateuch were received from God, it is not unworthy of Moſes: and againſt the divine authority of it, more than two arguments cannot be brought, the inſufficiency of the teſtimony of the Iſraelites as intereſted witneſſes, and the inconſiſtence of the repreſentations with the ſtate of nature as known to us, and with what may juſtly be conſidered proper to the character of God.

1. The

1. The former of theſe objections, that the Iſraelites were intereſted witneſſes, may appear groundleſs, if we conſider the nature of their intereſt—that it was neceſſary and providential, and did not ariſe from expectations of advantage.

That intereſt which invalidates the teſtimony of a witneſs implies ſomething evidently in his favor, and which he muſt be diſpoſed to maintain, though the ſubject of it be not true. But when a perſon teſtifies againſt his apparent advantage, and in ſupport of ſubjects from which he is averſe, his intereſt in them does not in this caſe weaken ; but is ever conſidered as confirming his teſtimony.

The Iſraelites did not believe Moſes becauſe he was of their nation, or was their leader : nor did they believe him becauſe he aſſerted authority from God to give them laws, nor becauſe they had any intereſt in thoſe laws as ſuited to their natural inclinations, or as obvious means of proſperity. No reaſon can be given for their faith, unleſs they witneſſed indubitable tokens

of

of the divine preſence and glory, and unleſs Moſes were called from among them, and by their deſire went, and for them received the divine commands.

Theſe commands they conſidered rigorous, and diſtinguiſhing them unfavorably from the reſt of mankind, and frequently rebelled againſt Moſes, and againſt God. In that account, which they are ſaid to have an intereſt in approving, they are repreſented in this light: and it cannot be imagined, unleſs the account were true, that they would conſent to ſuch a reproach upon themſelves.

Every circumſtance, denoting the preſence of God, was a teſtimony of the veracity of Moſes: his repreſentations were therefore ſupported on the divine authority: and on this principle it is eaſy to conceive that the Iſraelites ſhould acknowledge his repreſentations, againſt their prejudices and perverſe inclinations*.

2. The

* The public manifeſtation of the divine preſence to the Hebrew nation, and the public appointment of Moſes, were not believed, or were not conſidered by Mr. Barlow in his compari-

ſon

2. The ſecond objection to the divine authority of the Pentateuch is, that things are there related inconſiſtent with the ſtate of nature as known to us, and with proper ideas of the character of GOD.

For an anſwer to the former part of this objection, the reader is referred to the ſection on miracles. It may be uſeful, however, in this place to remark, that limiting all poſſible, or probable events by thoſe witneſſed in one, or in ſeveral generations, may very well ſerve a cauſe; but ſhows neither the candor of a reaſoner, nor the prudence of a philoſopher.

It is evident, to moſt men, that the world is an effect. It could not give exiſtence to itſelf; it was therefore created, and had a begin-

ſon of Moſes with Mahomet, and in the repreſentation of Moſes as inferior to the lawgiver of the Mexicans. DISSERTATION IN THE VISION OF COLUMBUS: and PAINE appears to have overlooked theſe circumſtances in aſſerting (page 18) "When Moſes "told the children of Iſrael that he received the two tables of the "commandments from the hand of GOD, they were not obliged "to believe him, becauſe they had no other authority for it than "his telling them ſo." If Moſes were publicly appointed to receive the law, and if tokens of the divine preſence were then before the Jews, there was ſome OTHER authority for believing him, than his telling them ſo

ning. Yet no one ſaw the world created, and to infer from its not being created in our time, that it was never created would be abſurd. In the ſame manner if there were a time in which God had not revealed his will to mankind, and in which it was neceſſary to give peculiar tokens of his preſence and authority, that he did deliver his will, connected with ſuch tokens, is to be believed, though ſimilar appearances have not been witneſſed by us. A renewal of thoſe teſtimonies might be inexpedient, if not morally impoſſible. Certainly they require much from God, who require that thoſe ſolemnities ſhould be renewed, not to confirm the law; but to convince them that they have been exhibited. With the ſame kind of reaſon might a perſon, who diſbelieves the creation of the world, demand that it ſhould be re-created, to prove that it is not ſelf-exiſtent and eternal.

The ſcriptures imply that there was a ſeaſon when God had not revealed his will to mankind, and when it was neceſſary for him, in delivering his law, to give peculiar teſtimonies

of

of his preſence and authority: and it is evidently our duty to examine the authenticity of the record, and not require a renewal of the teſtimonies—and it is no objection to the record, that ſimilar appearances have not been witneſſed by us, becauſe the analogy of nature cannot be inſiſted on in the preſent inſtance, more than in the creation of the world.

In conſidering the charge of inconſiſtence in the repreſentations of Moſes, with what may be conceived proper to the character of God, we ſhall omit, as not worthy of notice, thoſe remarks in which *Paine*, by affecting the ſatiriſt, has acted the buffoon*:—and ſhall confine our attention to two articles, the condition preſcribed in the trial of our firſt parents, and the concluding part of the ſecond command in the moral law.

He conſiders it inconſiſtent with the divine character, that "the eating of an apple ſhould "damn all mankind." Ruin was incurred, not by

* "Drollery in ſuch caſes is neither more, nor leſs,
"Than moody madneſs—laughing wild
"——— amidſt ſevereſt woe."
Letters on Infidelity.

by the magnitude of the action ; but by the nature of the action. It is a mark of weakneſs to judge of principles, by injuries which have reſulted from them. On this ground, there was little reaſon for the oppoſition made in America to the Britiſh government. Though that government had aſſerted a right to tax us in all caſes, and to try us in ſome caſes without a jury ; yet the *operation* of this aſſumed prerogative had cauſed but little inconvenience. A ſmall tax upon tea, and ſeveral other articles, and even the proſcription of ſeveral diſtinguiſhed characters was trifling, in compariſon with the expences of a war, and the deſtruction of many thouſands of our citizens. We were juſtified, therefore, in our oppoſition, by the *nature* of the principles againſt which we contended, and by the evil they *might* produce, and not by that which they *had* produced.

In the ſame manner our firſt parents incurred ruin by eating the forbidden fruit, not becauſe it was injurious for them to eat an apple ; but becauſe in eating that apple, they expreſſed

a diſobedient temper—a temper in which they would violate all the commands of God, and ſubvert all his eſtabliſhments. It was the principle, and not the enormity of the action which brought ruin on them, and their poſterity.

But if any inſiſt on ſo childiſh an argument as that great injuries only, conſtitute great offences, this can be true only in reference to ſociety, for in reference to God no injury can be produced. The act in this relation is the ſame, whether an apple, or the ſafety of the world, be the mode of trial: in neither caſe can God be injured, and criminality muſt depend wholly on the nature of the diſpoſition.

That the fruit of a tree was preſcribed to our firſt parents as a ſign of their obedience, is a proof that their trial reſpected their Maker. If the condition were trifling in itſelf, it was the more expreſſive of his condeſcenſion and goodneſs; the duty of obedience might with more eaſe be obſerved, and the guilt of tranſgreſſion was enhanced: ſo that this circumſtance is an argument in favor of the divine authority of the account.

The law, which was the ſum of what Moſes received from GOD, is allowed to be ſtrictly moral, excepting the concluding part of the ſecond command, "viſiting the iniquities of "the fathers upon the children," which *Paine* aſſerts (page 15) to be "contrary to every prin- "ciple of moral juſtice."

It is probable he did not underſtand the expreſſion; but conſidered it in the ſenſe in which the ſcripture teaches, that "it ſhall no more be "ſaid *the fathers have eaten ſour grapes, and the* "*children's teeth are ſet on edge.*" This declaration relates only to puniſhment, which is evident from the expreſſion that the "children's "teeth were ſet on edge," though they had not eaten the grapes: the people of that generation ſuppoſed, they were not ſo ſinful as to deſerve the evils they experienced; but were puniſhed for the ſins of their parents: in which ſenſe no one can juſtly ſuffer, or ever has ſuffered under the divine government. But in the former inſtance there is reference to character as well as ſuffering, and in this ſenſe, it is perfectly moral, that the iniquities of the fathers ſhould

be

be visited upon the children, and the truth is exhibited in nature.

That wicked parents may, and that they often do, *have* wicked children, is what every one must have observed. It cannot be unjust that they should be threatened with such children, provided it be not unjust that they should have them. That children are left to sin is not a punishment on them: their sinning constitutes their guilt, and is distinct from their punishment. But such children are a punishment on their parents, and therefore are threatened to deter them from sin. If children sin, they will suffer only for their own guilt; yet as they were left to sin, in consequence of the sins of their parents, the punishments inflicted on them may be considered a consequence of the sins of their parents, and thus the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon their children.

Yet the children are not punished if innocent: nor when guilty beyond the demerit of their personal transgressions. This truth some infer from the words, "of them that hate me," which they consider as referring to the children

as well as to the parents. But the paſſage plainly admits of the concluſion that the children are guilty, and to deny the juſtice of the threatening in this ſenſe, is a contradiction of nature, equally with the ſcriptures.

When the arguments, which have been adduced, are conſidered, it is preſumed that the objections to the writings of Moſes, as brought forward by *Paine*, will appear unreaſonable, and that the authority of thoſe writings will be allowed. No other authority than their own is neceſſary for their ſupport; for if this cannot be invalidated, why ſhould it be denied?

SECTION IV.

The Scriptures.

DIVINE Revelation is a term applied to the ſcriptures to denote their inſpiration, and not that every part was immediately ſuggeſted. Inſpiration is not neceſſarily confined to information, or ſuggeſtion; but implies the divine agency in ſuperintendence, guidance and aſſiſtance.

From

From its being ſaid that "all ſcripture is giv-
" en by inſpiration of GOD," it has been wrong-
ly inferred, that every part of them was imme-
diately *ſuggeſted:* Only thoſe things with
which the writers were not acquainted were in-
ſpired in this ſenſe. Thoſe which they had
formerly known were brought fully into re-
membrance, and whatever they knew, either
in a natural or ſupernatural manner, they were
ſecured from miſrepreſenting.

There is an abſurdity in ſuppoſing that things
known ſhould yet be ſuggeſted, for knowledge
once obtained precludes original information.
But inſpiration, in the other ſenſes, is of impor-
tance, if we conſider the weakneſs and infir-
mities of the mind, the difficulty of perfectly
recollecting circumſtances in paſt ſcenes, and
of juſtly deſcribing thoſe with which we are
beſt acquainted.

As the diſciples received by ſuggeſtion
things which they did not know, and as they
were dependent on GOD for the exerciſe of their
natural faculties, and were under his ſuperin-

tendence

tendence and guidance, ſo that in every reſpect they have made a true and faithful repreſentation of ſubjects, their writings are as truly inſpired, and are in fact the ſame as though every part of them had been immediately ſuggeſted.

Without reaſon therefore, and contrary to truth, does *Paine* aſſert (page 35) that "all "the hiſtorical and anecdotal part of the bi-"ble, which is almoſt the whole of it, does not "come within the compaſs of the word revela-"tion, and therefore is not the word of GOD." The word revelation, denotes inſpiration: and the various parts of ſcripture come under inſpiration in ſome ſenſes of the term, and therefore the whole of ſcripture is the word of GOD.

That the old and new Teſtaments are believed to be delivered by inſpiration, and in this ſenſe to be the word of GOD, is not owing to decrees of the ſanhedrim, or councils of the apoſtles, or biſhops; but in the firſt place, to indubitable teſtimonies of the preſence of GOD on Mount Sinai, and the rules then given for judging of revelation in future.

Allowing

Allowing that God determined to make a revelation of his will, connected with peculiar indiſputable ſigns, and to permit miſrepreſentation of it, it might with reaſon be expected that he would give rules for diſtinguiſhing true revelation when not attended with thoſe ſigns.

In the writings of Moſes rules were furniſhed for judging of the character of prophets, eſpecially of the Meſſiah, Deut. xviii. 21, 22, 15, 19. The writings of the prophets do not therefore depend on human authority; but were connected by the Jews with the writings of Moſes becauſe they bore marks of authenticity which thoſe writings defined. Jeſus Chriſt is the true Meſſiah, becauſe he is the character repreſented by Moſes, and more fully by the prophets, whom Moſes approved. If Jeſus Chriſt be the true Meſſiah, the writings of the apoſtles in their hiſtories, their epiſtles and prophecies are true, becauſe they were appointed by Chriſt, and their writings bear evident marks of authenticity in this character.

'Till

'Till the books of revelation were completed, individual perſons and churches compared the pretenſions of various writings to divine inſpiration. The principles on which certain books were approved, and others rejected, were not of a perſonal, or private; but of a divine and general nature. Thoſe books do not, therefore, reſt on human authority; but are left to the judgment of all ſucceeding generations.

Particular churches approved of particular books, and progreſſively received others, till the whole became generally acknowledged. But the collection was not made by one church for others, and ſeveral centuries elapſed, after the laſt book was written, and conſequently after the collection was formed, before we have an account of their being even mentioned by a Council*.

Councils

* "The canon of ſcriptures was not compoſed by any aſſem-
"bly—but was generally received in all churches." Du Pin, vol. 1, page 49.

"From the quotations of Ireneus, Turtullian and others in
"the ſecond century, of Origen in the third, and Euſebius in
"the fourth centuries, it appears that the greateſt part of the

"books

Councils did not render them authoritative in the common ſenſe of the word; but profeſſed their own faith, and that of their churches, without binding the conſcience of any one. There was then, and ever has been, unleſs from later corruptions of the church, perfect liberty for each individual to judge for himſelf: ſo that a book, called ſcripture, may be rejected, if inconſiſtent with the firſt revelation authen-

E ticated

"books received by us, were univerſally acknowledged in the "times, and had been ſo acknowledged in former times. The "canon was not determined by the authority of councils."—— Parker's Euſebius, page 70. Lardner's Credib. of the Goſpel vol. xiii. 49, 50.

"Origen ſays, I have learned by tradition, according to the "four goſpels which are received WITHOUT DISPUTE, by all "the churches of GOD under heaven." Ibid. vol. xiii. 52.

On what authority Paine aſſerts, that "the church mythologiſts collected all the writings they could find, and managed "them as they pleaſed.—That they decided by vote, which "of the books, out of the collection they had made, ſhould be "the word of GOD, and which ſhould not—that the book of "Luke was carried by a majority of ONE ONLY, and had thoſe "mythologiſts, voted otherwiſe, all the people, ſince calling "themſelves chriſtians, had believed otherwiſe." Pages 33, 34. —On what authority theſe aſſertions are made I am not able to determine. The conjecture moſt favorable to the author of them is, that they were ſome of thoſe thoughts which he repreſents as "bolting into his mind," and from which he confeſſes, "he has acquired almoſt all the knowledge he has." Page 104.

ticated to mankind; and if any book, not connected with ſcripture, can be brought within the rules for judging of inſpiration, it may be conſidered and called a part of ſcripture.

It will be obſerved, that the moral and ceremonial laws, and the writings ſtrictly prophetical compoſe but a ſmall part of ſcripture as to ſize, yet they compoſe a principal part in point of importance, and the other parts were written chiefly by prophets whoſe veracity, as divinely inſpired, being eſtabliſhed in one inſtance, renders their veracity in other inſtances unqueſtionable. Moſes, for example, in addition to the law delivered to the Iſraelites, wrote the hiſtory of the creation and of the firſt ages of mankind. As he was evidently authorized and inſtructed by God in delivering the law, it cannot be ſuppoſed he would publiſh falſhood in writing of his character, or diſpenſations in other reſpects.—Joſephus aſſerts, that "among "the Jews it was not lawful for every one to "write their own annals; but this province "was reſerved only for the prophets."

Attending

Attending impartially to the ſubject it will appear, that one part of ſcripture is ſo connected with another, that one part cannot be denied without bringing the whole into queſtion, and that there is reaſon the whole ſhould be acknowledged.

SECTION V.

Prophecy.

THE manifeſtation of the divine preſence to the Iſraelites, and the laws delivered to Moſes, are not the only teſtimonies of the inſpiration of the ſcriptures. That they are a divine revelation appears from the various prophecies which they contain, from the miracles, in general, which they repreſent and eſpecially from the nature of the goſpel, which it is their principal deſign to exhibit and illuſtrate—The firſt of theſe teſtimonies, *prophecy*, claims at this time our attention.

The word prophet literally ſignifies, *one who foretels events.* It is a derivative from the

Greek

Greek word [προφητης, or προφημι,] Prophētēs, or prophēmi, to ſpeak beforehand of what takes place. But as the *Greek* was not a ſcriptural language, till a long time after thoſe characters called prophets, appeared, the word [προφητης] prophētēs, was not the firſt name of thoſe characters; but they had an appellation in the Hebrew language, and the word expreſſive of them in this language [רֹאֶה, Rowhay] has the ſignification of Seers, implying that the prophets ſaw things which could not be known but by revelation; ſuch as paſt events, the memory of which was loſt, or to which there was no human witneſs: and future events, not to be determined from any known influence of cauſes, or ſubjects inviſible, by reaſon of their diſtance, or being of a ſpiritual nature.

The ſeers, or prophets, when inſpired, ſometimes experienced an elevation of mind, and expreſſed their revelations in poetical language, accompanied with muſic. But poetry, or muſic was not eſſential to the character of a prophet. They were only natural and ſuitable

attendants

attendants on prophecy. Whereas to ſee and foretel things was eſſential to the character.

Becauſe muſic and poetry were ſuitable attendants on prophecy, the heathen nations believed all poets were inſpired, and therefore uſed the words prophets and poets indiſcriminately. But it is a direct inverſion of truth to ſay they were ſtiled prophets in reference to metre: their poetry was ſtiled prophecy in reference to inſpiration. This miſrepreſentation in the author of the "Age of Reaſon," does not admit of excuſe, as he profeſſes to be acquainted with the heathen poets by tranſlations, and from them it is evident, that the poets pretended to inſpiration, it being an almoſt invariable form with them to invoke the aſſiſtance of ſome imaginary god.

Poetry and muſic are ſeveral times ſtiled propheſying in ſcripture, becauſe the three ſubjects were often connected. Yet the prophets did not always expreſs their revelations in poetry, accompanied with muſic; and the term prophet has an abſtract meaning, denoting in-

 ſpiration,

ſpiration. The caſe may be illuſtrated by the circumſtance that *Paine*, in a courſe of eſſays, adopted the ſignature of *Common Senſe*. By common ſenſe is really meant common opinion, free from particular prejudices. But ſhould one aſſert, that it means the writings of *Thomas Paine*, and that the phraſe was derived from them, it would be ſimilar to his aſſerting, that the word prophet originally denoted a muſician and poet.

Prophecy, in the true ſenſe of the word, is a teſtimony of the inſpiration of the ſcriptures. God is the author of truth. From him it is received, whenever a perſon knows, or declares it: and it muſt be received by revelation, when truths are declared which the human underſtanding has not means to inveſtigate. Such is the character of truths that are the ſubject of prophecy.

Not to mention accounts in the ſcriptures of things not before known, or of thoſe in their nature inviſible, as ſuch accounts may ſtill be queſtioned—they plainly fortel events that

have taken place, and the truth of which is attested by prophane history, and even our own observation.

Few persons of reading are ignorant that Porphyry, from the literal accomplishment of the prophecies of Daniel, asserted that those prophecies were written after the events had taken place. Another Porphyry, from the correspondence in the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem recorded in the gospel of Matthew, to the account of its destruction related by Josephus, has hardily asserted that the Gospel was written after Jerusalem was destroyed. *Paine* appears to follow the example of this reasoner. He either has not read the prophecies of scripture, and asserts from ignorance: or denies as belonging to scripture, every prophecy not mysterious and unintelligible; for he represents the true scripture prophecies as "a bow "of a thousand years, which comes only within "a thousand miles of a mark," page 145.

The falshood of this remark must turn the ridicule of it on himself; for not only the

prophecies

prophecies already mentioned are obvious; but in other inſtances, the accompliſhment has literally anſwered the prediction. We may mention as examples, the prophecy of the captivity of the Jews, during ſeventy years, by the Babylonians, Jer. xxv. 11, 12 : the prophecy of the deſtruction of Babylon, and its remaining perpetually deſolate, Ibid. xxv. 12, 13, 14, and Iſaiah xiii. 19—22 : the prophecy of the character and ſufferings of the Meſſiah, Geneſis iii. 15 : Deut. xviii. 15. Pſalm cx : Iſaiah liii. Daniel ix. 24—27 : the prophecy of the corruption of chriſtianity, and the pride and oppreſſion of antichriſt, 2 Theſſ. ii. 3, 4. Daniel vii. 23—25. Rev. xvii : finally, the prophecy that the Jews ſhould be diſperſed among the nations of the earth, and remain a diſtinct people—Deut. xxix and xxx. Hoſea iii. 4, 5. Luke xxi. 24*. Rom. xi. 25.

As

* PAINE is aſtoniſhed that the Jews ſhould be brought as a teſtimony of the truth of the Goſpel, becauſe THEY SAY IT IS FALSE. But they are adduced as a teſtimony, not from their faith, but from their ſtate as a people and their want of faith! What evidence would they be of the truth of the Goſpel, if they were of a character entirely different from what the goſpel deſcribes? This difficulty we ſhall leave Mr. PAINE to ſolve.

As the ſcriptures contain prophecies, that are unqueſtionable, it is certain they were inſpired, for the reaſon already mentioned, that truths which the human underſtanding has not means to inveſtigate, can be known only by revelation.

That the ſcriptures are a divine revelation, likewiſe appears from the miracles which they relate.

SECTION VI.

Miracles.

A MIRACLE is an operation contrary to the laws of nature, or above them. It is not a ſhow only, or an appearance; but a real operation, for which a real cauſe is neceſſary. *Paine*, in calling them *ſhows*, muſt have referred to the papal deceptions, and not to miracles in the ſenſe in which every material reality is a ſhow, or an appearance. If miracles in this ſenſe be derogatory to GOD, the creation of the world is derogatory to him.

Truth

Truth may not be ſo evident, as that a miracle may not be neceſſary to ſhow that it is truth, and comes from GOD. Were a perſon ſent, for inſtance, to warn the inhabitants of a certain diſtrict, or country, of an approaching famine, how could it be known that this perſon declared the truth, unleſs he produced ſome miracle? But if he ſhould cauſe the ſun to be dark, or the ſea to be dry, it would be a teſtimony from the Author of nature, that the perſon was his meſſenger.

Many of the truths of ſcripture could not be known without the teſtimony of miracles: they were not internally evident, and therefore required external proof. Of this the commiſſion of Moſes and Aaron to Pharaoh, the certainty that the Iſraelites would inherit the land of Canaan, and the doctrine that Chriſt was the Son of GOD, are particular inſtances. But it would be vain to attempt ſo much as to name the various caſes, in which the miracles recorded in ſcripture were neceſſary to witneſs truth.

As

As to moral truth, though it have an internal evidence, yet from the depravity of human nature this evidence is frequently not ſeen, and miracles may be neceſſary in ſupport of moral truth. Even the doctrine that JEHOVAH was the true GOD, to a nation long debaſed and perverted by habits of idolatry, might not appear, on being aſſerted, abſolutely certain; but extraordinary operations, becoming the true GOD, might be neceſſary to render the doctrine indiſputable.

Were it the conſtitution of nature that all men ſhould know truth, its internal evidence would be univerſally ſeen; but it appears the deſign of Heaven to convince men of truth, even when blind to the beauty of truth, and to effect this miracles are neceſſary.

Miracles are neceſſary not only as ſigns, but as events. The Goſpel cannot be true, unleſs there have been miracles; for a number of principal circumſtances in the ſcheme of the goſpel are miraculous. Unleſs Chriſt were the Son of GOD he was not free from guilt, and

unleſs

unleſs he aroſe from the dead to "believe in "him is vain, we are yet in our ſins."

To limit the Moſt High, in his government of the world, to that order of nature which we obſerve, is groſs impiety on any true principles of theology*. To deny that he has produced miracles,

* PAINE allows that GOD may perform miracles in the ſenſe of producing any event, and ſays, "every thing is a miracle in "one ſenſe." Page 135. But BOULANGER aſſerts, that "a "miracle is a thing impoſſible in the order of nature: if this "be changed GOD is not immutable—GOD himſelf, therefore, "cannot perform miracles, without counteracting the inſtitu-"tions of his own wiſdom." CHRISTIANITY UNVEILED, pages 76,77. Becauſe a miracle is a thing impoſſible in the order of nature, it does not follow that He who produced that order, may not vary, or ſuſpend it. Miracles are oppoſed to the laws of nature not in the ſenſe of a contradiction; but in that of ſucceſſion, and are therefore poſſible with GOD. If the ſun may ſhine one hour, and be obſcured with clouds the next, then it might ſhine one hour, and become dark the next: the latter would not denote mutability in GOD more than the former, unleſs it could be proved that he had determined the order of nature ſhould be perpetual. Becauſe there is an order in nature, to ſay that GOD determined it ſhould be invariable and perpetual, is aſſuming a principle not conceded. His will includes changes in effects, and it may include changes different from thoſe which uſually take place, and be conſiſtent and immutable: the only certain order of nature is its ſubſervience to the will of the Creator. How far a denial of the poſſibility of miracles, is a denial of the power of GOD, and conſequently of his exiſtence, it is not neceſſary to conſider. But the reader will be able to judge from the following expreſſions, whether BOULANGER (as Dr. PRIESTLY aſſerts of the Philoſophers, in general, whom he ſaw in France) be not an INFIDEL as to this truth—"What

miracles, is a denial of the extenſion of his government beyond the common laws of nature, and is not ſimply a diſpute about ſigns, but the contradiction of a ſyſtem, which includes miraculous circumſtances as eſſential parts of it.

As events and as ſigns GOD may produce miracles, and will appear as great and as good in ſuſpending, and greater and more excellent in ſuperſeding the laws of nature, than at firſt in appointing them. The ſcripture ſyſtem may be true, therefore, though it includes miracles as events: and it is true, becauſe almoſt

"kind of Being ſhall we contemplate, when we add to this "the ineffable attributes aſcribed to him in the chriſtian theol-"ogy? Is the Godhead deſcribed when it is ſaid, that it is a "SPIRIT, an immaterial being, which reſembles nothing pre-"ſented to our ſenſes? Is not human underſtanding confound-"ed with the negative attributes of infinity, immenſity, eter-"nity, OMNIPOTENCE and omniſcience, with which he has "been decorated only to render him ſtill more incomprehen-"ſible?" Chriſtianity Unveiled, p. 95. If GOD be not a ſpirit, nor eternal, nor omnipotent, nor omniſcient, nor unlike any thing that we ſee with our eyes, certainly there is no GOD. This is a ſpecimen of a work, containing in ſome inſtances the meaneſt credulity, and in ſome the groſſeſt miſrepreſentations, and in but few, any marks of judgment, or candor; but which the American Editor has given to the public, in a very decent tranſlation, from a ſenſe of duty as a citizen.

every part of it has been confirmed by miracles as ſigns. This is particularly the caſe with the more eſſential parts, as the writings of Moſes, and the doctrines of Chriſt.

Allowing that miracles are conſiſtent, it may be thought the performance of them cannot be proved to us, as we have not witneſſed ſuch events. But it is not reaſonable to require a repetition of miracles to confirm miracles. If thoſe recorded in ſcripture have been produced, many of them cannot be repeated; for they were not ſigns only, but events. How, for inſtance, can Chriſt ariſe again from the dead? Or with what propriety can he manifeſt himſelf to mankind, at the preſent day, as he was manifeſted to his diſciples, eſpecially to *Thomas?* It were to require, not ſimply a miracle, but an abſurdity, to require a renewal of many of the miracles recorded in ſcripture.

Nor is it proper to demand that miracles, as ſigns, be confirmed by the ſame, or by any new miracles. Miracles are rendered credible, and may fulfil the purpoſes of religion, by the

teſtimony

teſtimony of ſuitable witneſſes, as well as by the teſtimony of our own ſenſes. They are rendered credible, when the relators of them do not appear to be influenced by prejudice, by intereſt, or enthuſiaſm—and when the miracles were conſiſtent with the ſtate of things, and of importance as ſigns and events. To object to the underſtanding and diſintereſtedneſs of the writers of ſcripture, becauſe they have related miracles, is ſo plainly expreſſive of prejudice againſt miracles, that it cannot in the leaſt affect the character of thoſe writers, and it may ſtill be aſſerted, that the miracles recorded in ſcripture are true, becauſe the writers of them were in the perfect exerciſe of reaſon, were endowed with the ſenſes of human nature—were influenced by no prejudice, or ſiniſter motive, either to believe, or relate what we are told they witneſſed, and the miracles were important as ſigns, and neceſſary as events—not a natural, but moral neceſſity.

The perſon who diſbelieves the miracles recorded in ſcripture, might diſpute the teſtimo-

ny of his own ſenſes, were he to witneſs their accompliſhment* : or allowing the certainty of his being convinced, as in the caſe of the Iſraelites at Mount Sinai, or the Phariſees who ſaw the miracles of Chriſt; yet with ſuch a temper he would pervert a conviction of the truth to the diſhonor of God, and his own ruin: with the Iſraelites he might turn to the worſhip of a calf; or with the Phariſees might impute the operation of God to the agency of ſatan: ſo that a denial of the miracles recorded in ſcripture, is an implicit denial that God can produce a miracle which ſhall deſerve credit as his work, and ſubſerve the intereſt of religion.

That faith which reſults from miracles is not virtuous, unleſs the diſpoſition be good, or correſpond to the doctrines confirmed by miracles. As the perſon who denies the *rational* teſtimony of the performance of a miracle, is influenced by ſome prejudice, he would on this principle deny the miracle, were he to witneſs

* Boulanger ſays, "A wiſe man having ſeen a miracle, might "with propriety doubt the evidence of his own ſenſes." Page 77.

witneſs it: or would pervert the event to ſome evil purpoſe. For this reaſon the teſtimony given in ſcripture of miracles is ſuited to all the purpoſes of religion, and in new miracles GOD would not be honored, nor the heart made better.

The miracles recorded in ſcripture have a rational teſtimony. They were not of a private, but public nature: were addreſſed to the ſenſes, and to reaſon; and were ever witneſſed by a number ſufficient to atteſt their truth: though not in any caſe by all poſſible witneſſes, nor ſo generally by the Jews, after they had rejected Chriſt, and treated him with the greateſt cruelty. But the miracles were ever witneſſed by a ſufficient number to anſwer the full purpoſe of evidence: and they are related with candor; without any appearance of partiality—with honeſty; without any appearance of fraud, and conſequently without any juſt ſuſpicion of enthuſiaſm. We may, therefore, aſſert that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation, becauſe they are ſupported by miracles.

SECTION VII.

Myſtery.

Mr. *PAINE* juſtly remarks, that every thing we behold is, in one ſenſe, "a myſtery "to us: we cannot account how it is that an "acorn put into the ground is made to devel- "ope itſelf and become an oak:"—and he adds, "the fact, however, as diſtinct from the "operating cauſe, is not a myſtery, becauſe "we ſee it," page 132. In this article he ſuggeſts the ſenſe in which nothing of a religious nature is myſterious: for the viſible and inviſible ſtates have a perfect correſpondence in this reſpect, that as to fact, or truth, nothing in either of them is myſterious.

The term myſtery does not apply to facts, or doctrines, as true; but only to the cauſe, or manner of their being true. If all nature be full of myſteries in this ſenſe, it is not ſurprizing that the ſpiritual ſtate, which is inexpreſſibly ſuperior to the material, is likewiſe full of myſteries.

Paine

Paine in asserting, that "the word mystery "cannot be applied to moral truth," (page 131) appears to have exercised no reflection: for moral truth includes the character and operations of GOD, it includes the existence and exercises of all intelligent creatures, and to say there is nothing mysterious in these subjects, would lead us to question whether the person were in the exercise of reason.

If by "moral truth" were meant moral law, it was only saying that laws, to be obeyed, must be understood: and the remark in this sense is not an objection to the scriptures; for the precepts they contain are intelligible.—Subjects mysterious may be believed as true, though the manner of their being true is not known. A mystery implies no contradiction: in this respect it differs from an absurdity, and is worthy of belief.

The doctrines and objects of faith in the scriptures are only mysterious: they imply no contradiction, and it is not rational to deny

them

them becauſe the manner in which they are true is hidden from our ſight.

The doctrine that Chriſt is the Son of GOD, involves no contradiction. The ſcriptures repreſent the divine and human natures, not as blended, or tranſmuted, ſo that what is human is divine, and what is divine is human; but united, ſo as to form a complex character. We obſerve in the exiſtence of man, that reaſon may be united to matter, ſo as to form one being; yet the ſubject is myſterious. Of the ſame nature is the doctrine, that GOD may be united to a ſoul and body, ſo as to conſtitute a being, or perſon. To deny this doctrine becauſe it is myſterious, is a principle on which we may as well deny, that ſoul and body conſtitute the exiſtence of man: or that GOD, who is a ſpirit, hath created matter.

The doctrine of the TRINITY is ſtrictly credible, as it is *only* myſterious. In the expreſſion "Theſe THREE are ONE," in the 1ſt epiſtle of John, nothing contradictory is aſſerted, for the term *three*, when applied to

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the divine nature, evidently has not the ſame predicate, as when applied to arithmetical numbers, or to multitude. Three which are one, cannot mean the ſame with three which are not one. But the difficulty of explaining the predicate of the former, as it exiſts in the divine nature, renders the doctrine myſterious. It is, however, aſſerted: and is confirmed by thoſe teſtimonies, with which other parts of revelation are ſupported; and till the predicate of the term THREE be known, it is moſt abſurd to deny that the doctrine is true*.

If ſecond cauſes be myſterious, it may well be ſuppoſed that the firſt cauſe, which involves all cauſes, is infinitely more myſterious: and

when

* Should the queſtion ariſe, why the word THREE is uſed, if it have not preciſely the ſame meaning as when applied to numbers? It may be anſwered, that it is better adapted to the ſubject than any other word in language, and is a fuller expreſſion of the divine exiſtence than nature exhibits, and our ignorance of its meaning reſults, not from the impropriety of the term; but from the myſtery of the doctrine. An example, however, of the uſe of terms in this manner, is to be found in almoſt every expreſſion which refers to the divine character: thus when we ſay GOD operates, or acts, we cannot explain our meaning, for to act denotes motion; yet a Being who fills infinite ſpace cannot move, in the common ſenſe of the word.

when we cannot explain the exiſtence of a fly, nor account for the growth of an acorn, it is not to be expected that we ſhould underſtand the myſteries in the exiſtence of the CREATOR.

SECTION VIII.

State of human Nature.

THE perſon who tranſgreſſes in one inſtance, becomes wholly depraved: for there is a ſtrict connection between the laws of GOD —they are ſupported on the ſame authority, and are uniform in their nature and deſign: ſo that the perſon who violates one of them, manifeſts the want of a temper of obedience, and in this ſenſe is oppoſed to all of them. If he do not tranſgreſs all of them it is owing, not to his having an obedient diſpoſition; but to want of opportunity, or power; or to his being under reſtraint from conſiderations of his own intereſt. Appearances of virtue, in this caſe, will not be true virtue; but the

reſult

result of the temporary intereſts of a perſon, and will vary as his intereſt varies.

Mankind, as they exiſt on the principles of their firſt creation, are wholly ſinful, becauſe they are deſtitute of a ſpirit of obedience to GOD: and the appearances of virtue among them, are only the agreeable and ſplendid forms which their intereſts in a ſtate of ſociety have aſſumed—and were it not for the diſpenſation of the goſpel they would undergo the puniſhment of creatures wholly depraved, and be involved in ruin. But by the goſpel perſons may be recovered from a ſtate of ſin, and have a holy diſpoſition: and the myſterious example may be exhibited of a perſon exiſting in two characters, ſin and holineſs, ſo that "with his mind "he ſhall ſerve the law of GOD, and with his "fleſh the law of ſin." This is a connection more ſurpriſing than that of ſpirit with matter, and is a conſtant miracle.

The ſcriptures place human nature in this view. They repreſent that a perſon may have the appearance of many virtues, without a tem-

per

per of obedience; and that a perſon may have the temper of obedience, and yet fall into many ſins. This repreſentation is not only conſiſtent in itſelf; but correſpondent to experience: for certainly a number of perſons exhibit appearances of virtue, not merely from ſuſpicious; but baſe motives: and ſome perſons, though not free from ſin, cannot with any ſhare of candor be thought deſtitute of ſincerity and an obedient temper.

A virtuous appearance, when it does not reſult from a virtuous diſpoſition, cannot be ſtiled virtue; for reaſon teaches, that this quality reſpects the heart. The ſcriptures aſſert *that* to be virtue which is virtue, and approve of it: and they point out ſin, and condemn it in all its modifications, even though it may aſſume the garb of an angel of light. The ſcriptures, next to the perfect example of Chriſt, deſcribe a number of characters virtuous in the ſenſe already conſidered, that we may imitate them ſo far as they were virtuous: and they deſcribe

a number of evil characters for our inſtruction and warning.

From the correſpondence of theſe accounts in the ſacred writings to reaſon and experience, it muſt appear that *Paine* is wholly wrong in all thoſe parts of his book in which he charges the ſcriptures with miſrepreſenting and degrading human nature. The ſcriptures do not miſrepreſent mankind; but give them inſtruction: and mankind are not injured by the ſcriptures, unleſs, when they find falſe principles of conduct deſtroyed, they refuſe to act on thoſe which are juſt: or unleſs, in attending to characters to be avoided, they chooſe to imitate them: or unleſs, by a deſcription of the way to ultimate perfection, they become averſe from the firſt principles of a holy life. So far as precept and example are neceſſary to a virtuous character, the ſcriptures are calculated to inform and exalt human nature.

SECTION IX.

The Goſpel.

THOUGH there are myſteries in the divine nature which can never be comprehended, yet it is our duty to have ſome knowledge of it, even all the knowledge of which we are capable. GOD is the Creator of all things—the ſupporter and governor of all things, and infinitely the moſt excellent and glorious Being. From every principle, therefore, of reaſon, of gratitude and of obedience, are we called to ſtudy and contemplate his character.

When perſons have become blind to every other teſtimony of the divine exiſtence, they have allowed it from neceſſity. On this argument chiefly does *Paine* inſiſt. He ſays (page 67) "Incomprehenſibly difficult as it is "for man to conceive what a firſt cauſe is, he "arrives at the belief of it, from the tenfold "greater difficulty of diſbelieving it:"—that "we are carried on, as it were by neceſſity, "to the belief of a firſt cauſe, eternally exiſt-

"ing,

"ing, of a nature totally different from any "material exiſtence we know of, and by the "power of which all things exiſt, and this firſt "cauſe man calls GOD."

The argument of neceſſity applies to the perfection of GOD, as well as to his exiſtence. If it be neceſſary that he exiſt, it is neceſſary that he be perfect. To ſuppoſe it neceſſary that he exiſt, and yet that he may be imperfect, is a reflection on his character, and what no creature has a right to ſay. As GOD is the firſt and creating cauſe, he muſt be the ſum of excellence, and the ſtandard of judgment; and for a creature to ſay he may be imperfect, is not only in a moral ſenſe blaſphemy, but in a natural ſenſe abſurd; for if the creating cauſe be imperfect, it follows that we muſt err in our judgment, and conſequently that we may be wrong in charging him with imperfection.

From the neceſſity of the perfection of the character of GOD, it is common to impute to him infinite power, infinite wiſdom, infinite juſtice, and infinite goodneſs. But without the

goſpel

goſpel theſe attributes do not appear in a perfect light; and wholly rejecting the goſpel, the truth of ſome of them muſt be doubted.

The natural world contains many indications of the divine perfection: the goſpel correſponds to theſe indications, ſo far as they appear, and is complete in thoſe reſpects in which the inſtructions of nature are deficient. If we infer from nature that God is merciful; the goſpel repreſents his mercy, and the way in which it may conſiſtently be exerciſed: if we infer from nature that God is juſt, the goſpel repreſents his perfect juſtice in the full execution of the penalty of his law: if we look forward in hope to a future ſtate of exiſtence, and think it neceſſary to the infinite juſtice and benevolence of Deity, that new diſpenſations of government be exhibited; this hope is confirmed in the goſpel—by the doctrines, the ſufferings and the reſurrection of Chriſt, "life and immortality are brought to light," and both rewards and puniſhments, according to the characters of perſons, are inſured.

Every

Every juſt concluſion from nature, becomes an argument, *a priorì* of the truth of the goſpel; and the perſon who well obſerves the manifeſtation of the divine character in nature, cannot conſiſtently deny that the goſpel is divine.

Having every ſolemnity of external teſtimony, the mind muſt be very raſh in rejecting it; but the internal evidence of its truth, is its beſt ſupport; and no advantage will be derived from acknowledging miracles, or any other teſtimonies, unleſs the doctrines to which they refer be underſtood. If theſe doctrines be inconſiſtent with the character of GOD, as infinite in perfection, nothing can confirm them as coming from him; but if they illuſtrate his character, it is neceſſary that they be acknowledged. In attending to the ſubject, let us conſider the doctrine of the incarnation —the doctrine of the atonement—that the goſpel is a repreſentation of the divine character ſuperior to any ſyſtem of natural religion, and then the nature, and divine truth of the goſpel.

ARTICLE I.—*The doctrine of the Incarnation.*

THIS doctrine is implied in the firſt promiſe in ſcripture: and the mode of expreſſion ſhows, that the belief of it does not depend, as Mr. Levy has ſuggeſted*, on the wrong tranſlation of a word, which may be rendered, "a young *married* woman, as well as virgin." If the ſeed, or ſon of the *woman*, were to bruiſe the ſerpent's head, then the Meſſiah was to be born of a woman, without any father but GOD; and conſequently of a woman while ſhe was a virgin; and this truth, which is particularly repreſented in the goſpel, is eſſential to the ſyſtem of chriſtianity.

The heathen ſuppoſed that gods might have intercourſe in human ſociety; and on this ground *Paine* has aſſerted, that the doctrine of the character of Chriſt originated from them. But in this aſſertion he is guilty of an *anacroniſm*, for the doctrine of ſcripture, from the antiquity of the hebrew writings, was previous to the opinion of the heathen; and

* Letters to Dr. PRIESTLY.

and might be adopted by them, ſo far as they believed that GOD might appear in human nature. That there is a correſpondence in the heathen mythology to the chriſtian ſyſtem in this reſpect, is not an objection to the chriſtian ſyſtem, more than to the belief in a GOD: for the heathen mythology included *gods*, as well as *ſons* of gods, and the character of each was equally perverted.

If the heathen mythology were, in ſome inſtances, a perverſion of the ſcripture doctrine that GOD might be manifeſted in human nature, it appears, in many inſtances, to have reſulted ſolely from the ignorant and depraved ſtate of their ſociety. They deified heroes by ſtiling them gods; but deſtitute of true ideas of divinity, they did not diveſt them of human paſſions: they manifeſted an ignorance even of the common principles of morality, and their repreſentations of the ſuperior powers ſtrictly accorded with the irregular and impure ſtate of their own ſociety.

But

But the ſcripture ſyſtem is perfectly moral: it gives an account of the birth of the SON of GOD, as GOD: to manifeſt the character and will of Deity, and accompliſh a labour of infinite importance to his works. To deny the morality of the doctrine, is a denial of the divine power: and to ſay that it was derived from the heathen, is miſtaking the name for an agreement. With the ſame propriety, as has already been ſuggeſted, may we aſſert, that a belief in the true God reſulted from the heathen, as that the belief in the true SON of GOD reſulted from them; in their mythology is the profeſſion of *divinities*, as well as ſons of divinities. If the deiſt diſclaim a refinement on the heathen mythology in his belief of a GOD, becauſe he believes in but one; then the chriſtian may diſclaim any reference to the heathen mythology in his belief in the SON of GOD, for he believes in but one, whoſe character is as peculiar as that of the Father, and in whoſe human exiſtence no law of morality is violated, no attribute of divinity is degraded;

graded; but juſtice and benevolence and holineſs are expreſſed.

ARTICLE 2.—*The doctrine of the Atonement.*

Mr. *Paine*, in profeſſing (page 106) "I be-
"lieve that any ſyſtem of religion that has any
"thing in it that ſhocks the mind of a child,
"cannot be a true religion," did not conſider that the ſyſtem of *deiſm*, and of every religion, neceſſarily includes the doctrine of temporal death. Yet it is diſtreſſing to a child to hear that it muſt die: there is ſomething very ſhocking to its mind, to think of being put in a coffin, and laid in the grave: ſo that this *reaſoner*, were nature a ſubject of theory, and not of experience, would deny that it is conſiſtent with the divine character. There is nothing in the doctrine of the atonement more cruel than in the doctrine of death.—Deity is infinitely above ſufferings. All ſufferings are neceſſary only from the limited nature of creatures, and are rendered ſubſervient to the higheſt good.

With

With regard to the *manner* of dying, *Paine* argues (page 52, 53) the "ſentence paſſed "upon Adam, was not that *thou ſhalt ſurely* "*be crucified*, but *thou ſhalt ſurely die*. Cru- "cifixion, therefore, or any other particular "manner of dying, made no part of the ſen- "tence, that Chriſt was to ſuffer in the room "of Adam. A fever would have done as "well as a croſs, if there were any occaſion for "either." If the ſentence pronounced on Adam did not define the manner of dying, then it admitted of crucifixion: and if more important purpoſes might be anſwered by Chriſt's experiencing death in this than in any other form, there was ſufficient reaſon for his ſuffering crucifixion. We find that the manner of death is exceedingly varied among mankind, though the threatening is the ſame to all. We conclude that the manner is varied for wiſe ends—and were there not important reaſons that Chriſt ſhould expire on the croſs, he doubtleſs would have died of a fever, or in

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ſome other method leſs painful and ignominious than the croſs.

In the preceding quotation, *Paine* conſiders the penalty of ſin as only temporal death; but he immediately leaves this idea, and ſays (page 54) "If Jeſus Chriſt came into this world to "ſuffer, which is a word *they* ſometimes uſe "inſtead of *to die*, the only real ſuffering he "could have endured would have been to "live." If Chriſt came into the world to ſuffer, did his ſubſequent happineſs render it not true that he had ſuffered the pains of death?—But without pretending to follow this *ignis fatuus* of a writer through all his extravagancies, let us confine our attention, in this article, to two points, the *origin* of the doctrine of the atonement, and its *juſtice*.

The conjecture of *Paine*, that the doctrine was "deviſed to favor the revenues of the "church—as a ſupport of the doctrines of pur-"gatory, pardons, diſpenſations and indulgen-"cies," is as deſtitute of probability as it is inconſiſtent with truth. He allows that theſe

things

things take their riſe from the crucifixion; but concludes "the whole was fabricated to "anſwer this purpoſe" (page 58.) That the hebrew ſcriptures are of higher antiquity than the doctrine of purgatory, and the inſtitutions of the church of Rome, even *Paine* will not, on reflection, deny. Yet the doctrine of the atonement is plainly exhibited through thoſe writings, and was indeed the ſpirit of the ſervice of the antient Church.

So far was the doctrine from being deviſed to favor the revenues of the church, that it did not begin with the chriſtian æra; but Chriſt is a character which had long been repreſented and typified. The firſt ſuggeſtion of the ſufferings of Chriſt is in Gen. iii. 15—*I will put enmity between thee and the woman; and between thy ſeed and her ſeed: it ſhall bruiſe thy head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe his heel.* His ſufferings are plainly and fully repreſented in the writings of the prophets, and were typified in the ſacrifices which took place in the earlieſt ages of the world, and which were parti-

cularly inſtituted in the Iſraelitiſh church.—The character of Chriſt is ſo plain an example of the fulfilment of the repreſentations and types of the old teſtament, and is ſo neceſſarily connected with them, that to infer the doctrine of the atonement from any other ſource is not only an abuſe of common ſenſe; but as we have hiſtoric evidence that it was not deviſed with the papal errors, to give it that origin manifeſts the groſſeſt indolence, or the moſt hardened credulity.

The *juſtice* of the doctrine is a circumſtance diſtinct from its origin: and on this part of the ſubject *Paine* has brought ſome confuſion by a ſophiſtical argument on pecuniary and moral juſtice. He has conſidered pecuniary juſtice only on a pecuniary principle: whereas conſidered on a moral principle, it is a branch of moral juſtice, and an argument in favor of the atonement.

The term *juſtice* has ſeveral ſignifications, ſome of which do not neceſſarily imply moral juſtice, but may be a violation of it. *Pecunia-*

ry juſtice is money paid, for money borrowed. The perſon who pays his creditor the ſum borrowed of him, fulfils pecuniary juſtice, though the ſum paid were ſtolen by the debtor from his neighbour; but in this caſe he does not fulfil moral juſtice, for the money is not his, and inſtead of transferring it to his creditor, he ought to return it to the perſon from whom it was purloined. *Literal juſtice* is following the letter of a law; but the letter may be followed, and yet the ſpirit and moral juſtice of the law evaded. *Legal juſtice* denotes the execution of a law; but if the law be not morally good, the execution of it is not moral juſtice. By MORAL JUSTICE is meant the ſupport and encouragement of right, and the cenſure and diſcouragement of wrong: in ſupporting all that is right, and diſcouraging all that is wrong no ſin is implied; but perfect rectitude is expreſſed, and this muſt be moral juſtice.

On the principle of moral juſtice a perſon is bound to regard and ſecure his property, as

well

well as his life. If a perſon, conſiſtently with this duty, may diſpoſe of his property for another, then conſiſtently with the duty he may diſpoſe of his life for another: to ſay that he may ſuffer in his property, but not in his perſon, denotes an imperfect ſenſe of juſtice as to property: or the indulgence of compaſſion againſt juſtice in the caſe of perſonal affliction. It is a much greater ſacrifice when a perſon gives his life, than when he gives his property for another; but they are both of the ſame nature, and may be defended on the principle of moral juſtice.

When it is ſaid that the innocent may ſuffer for the guilty, it is meant that the innocent may bear the puniſhment, but not the guilt of ſin: when a perſon pays a debt for his neighbor, it is not ſuppoſed that the perſon who pays contracted the debt, or that he is chargeable with it in any other ſenſe than that he conſents to pay it: and when a perſon ſuffers puniſhment for another, it is not ſuppoſed that he contracted the guilt to which his ſufferings re-

late,

late, or that he bears it in any other ſenſe than bearing the puniſhment of it. There is an abſurdity in ſuppoſing that an innocent perſon takes upon him the guilt of the one for whom he ſuffers : it implies that he is not innocent, or that he does not really take the guilt. In the repreſentations in ſcripture of the atonement "bearing ſin," neceſſarily intends the puniſhment of ſin.

It is not juſt for a law to *require* payment, excepting of the debtor : nor puniſhment, excepting of the criminal ; yet the law may *admit* both of payment and puniſhment by ſubſtitution. Every perſon is not in a capacity to pay the debts of another, and every perſon is not in a capacity to ſuffer for another ; but if one be in a capacity, why he may not conſent, and be *permitted* to bear the puniſhment, it is not poſſible to ſay. An innocent being may conſent to bear the puniſhment of the guilty, becauſe there is a diſtinction between ſin and puniſhment. Innocence is injured only by guilt: it is not injured by puniſhment provided

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it can conſent to bear that puniſhment and yet remain innocence. In this caſe inſtead of being injured it will be improved, or appear in higher beauty and luſtre. If an innocent being may conſent to ſuffer for the guilty, then he may juſtly ſuffer : for if he may not juſtly ſuffer, it is ſuppoſing him to conſent to that which is unjuſt, and deſtroys his innocence. If an innocent being ſuffer, an atonement is made, for ſuch a being does not deſerve to ſuffer, and unleſs his ſufferings be in vain they muſt refer to others.

When the innocent is puniſhed for the guilty, the law is not executed in a literal ſenſe, but it is executed in a moral ſenſe ; for if the innocent remain innocent, though he ſuffer, he is ſtill approved : and as the puniſhment is inflicted it is a proof that ſin is diſapproved, and this is *moral juſtice.* Agreeably to this is the expreſſion of the Apoſtle, 2 Cor. iii. 6—*for the* letter *killeth* ; *but the* ſpirit *giveth life :* the divine law executed in the letter of it, or in the ſenſe of *literal* juſtice, would deſtroy mankind,

for they have ſinned, and the law threatens only the guilty ; but the law executed in the ſpirit of it, or in a *moral* ſenſe, allows mankind to live, for the puniſhment has fallen upon a ſubſtitute—an innocent being conſented to bear it, was in circumſtances to bear it, and was permitted to bear it. This perſon was approved as innocent, though he ſuffered : and the children of men are diſapproved as guilty, though they may be pardoned : thus moral juſtice is ſtrictly maintained and the higheſt benevolence expreſſed in the doctrine of the atonement.

The doctrine cannot be fully illuſtrated by any other example than the one given of it in ſcripture : it is ſtrictly reſembled by no ſubject in nature, yet all objections to it may be removed, and it may be believed on the ſame principle that we believe the divine exiſtence, which is ſtrictly reſembled by no other ſubject, or as we believe many divine and natural truths, of which there is no collateral evidence. The doctrine is perfectly moral, not only in the ſenſe of divine

government

government but in its influence on creatures. It is indeed *abuſed* by many to licentiouſneſs; but were a perſon to realize the near relation which Chriſt ſuſtains to him, by exiſting in human nature; were he to realize his benevolence in bearing the puniſhment of ſin; were he to conſider, in a proper temper, the divine diſapprobation of the ſinner in the puniſhment laid Chriſt, and the enhanced puniſhment which muſt fall on thoſe who reject the atonement and perſiſt in tranſgreſſion, he would turn from ſin as the deepeſt ingratitude, would fly from it as the moſt cruel enemy. The doctrine of the atonement implies the greateſt diſſuaſives from ſin, and the ſtrongeſt obligations to obedience, and therefore is the moſt highly moral, of any that has ever been ſuggeſted to the mind: or of which reaſon can conceive: or of which the divine government can admit: and when we conſider the character and ſtate of exiſtence, divine and human, we may ſay there is a tenfold greater difficulty in diſbelieving, than in believing the doctrine.

ARTICLE 3.—*The Goſpel a repreſentation of the divine Character, ſuperior to any Syſtem of natural Religion.*

IT has already been ſtated, that every truth indicated in nature is carried out in a clear light in the goſpel, and that the goſpel is perfect in thoſe reſpects in which nature is deficient. If the goſpel be a fuller expreſſion of the divine character than the ſtate of things in this world exhibits, then it is fuller than other viſible worlds exhibit. By enlarging the ſyſtem of creation we do not acquire any new ideas of GOD. One world diſplays his character the ſame as a thouſand worlds. By going out into the immenſity of ſpace, and contemplating ſyſtems beyond ſyſtems, we give extenſion to the ideas already received, but obtain information of no original truth—the greatneſs of the univerſe, as repreſented by philoſophers, is beſt calculated to give the impreſſion of *infinity*; yet this impreſſion it cannot produce, for all finite ſubjects are infinitely ſhort of infinite, and the impreſſion, ſo far as we

are

are capable of it, may be obtained in remarking the wonders of the divine hand in one world.

But the gospel implies a new manifestation of Deity: simply the doctrine, that Christ is the Son of God, contains a higher expression of his character than any system of natural religion, and causes the created sun to become dark, and the heavens, with all their stars, to fade.— It is evident to reason, that if Christ be the Son of God, more divinity is manifested in his character, than in as many material worlds, as are possible, or conceivable. It is the representation of scripture, that Christ is a *new* manifestation of Deity, and one that is much more sublime than nature, and therefore nature is to be dissolved. Not to perceive that in Christ higher wisdom and power and benevolence are manifested than in the natural world, denotes inattention to his character as the Son of God, and to his example.

Article 4. *The Nature of the Gospel.*

It is the design of the Gospel to exhibit, in its full lustre, the character of God. Of this

character

character Chriſt, it is ſaid, is a perfect example.

Believing that there is a *Firſt Cauſe*, it is ſtill of importance to know the character of that Cauſe, for without ſuch a knowledge it cannot be ſuitably regarded, or imitated.

As the ſame neceſſity which compels us to allow the exiſtence of the Firſt Cauſe, compels us to allow his perfection, we may infer that God is not *material*. Matter is not the higheſt kind of exiſtence. It is not intelligent: leſs than this it is not animate—it is inert. From a number of conſiderations it muſt be evident, that the Firſt Cauſe is not material, or that matter is not God.

On the ſame principle it may be ſaid, that the term *Spirit* does not fully expreſs his character. A ſpirit may be good or evil. Intelligence may be exerciſed in an improper manner—deviſing what is wrong and producing what is injurious. If a ſpirit be evil, it is a peculiarly bad kind of exiſtence, and therefore the character of God is not

fully

fully defined in calling him a Spirit. Chriſt in this expreſſion, referred to his character in a ſenſe in which it was miſunderſtood as the object of worſhip. It was ſuppoſed that GOD could be ſuitably worſhiped only on mount Gerizim; to correct which opinion Chriſt ſaid, "GOD is a Spirit;" meaning, that acceptable worſhip does not eſſentially depend on the place where it is offered, as GOD is not a material, or confined exiſtence; but ſpiritual, and preſent in all places, and therefore to be worſhiped "in ſpirit and in truth." GOD *is* a Spirit. He muſt of neceſſity be viewed in this light, that any juſt ideas may be entertained of him. Yet the expreſſion does not define his moral character, and after believing that GOD is a ſpirit, it is ſtill neceſſary that we know the character of this Spirit.

In the ſcriptures it is ſaid, that "GOD is *love*." —*Love* is moral excellence, and is evidently ſuperior to material and ſpiritual exiſtence. Material exiſtence is not capable of love, and ſpiritual exiſtence, without it is worthleſs.

The

The Apoſtle ſays, " Though he had all know-
" ledge, and could ſpeak with the tongue of
" angels ; yet if he had not *charity*, he ſhould
" be as ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cym-
" bal :" and an infinite ſpirit without love, would be worthy of no eſteem ; but his greatneſs would render him proportionably an object of fear and diſapprobation.

So far have we gone on with diſtinctions : and one more appears to be neceſſary, and is indeed of the higheſt importance : for the word *Love*, as well as *Juſtice*, is uſed in various ſenſes, ſome of which do not imply moral excellence ; but may be a violation of it. Acknowledging that God is *Love*, it is therefore neceſſary that we underſtand the meaning of the term, as applied to him. Ignorant of it we ſhall be ignorant of his character, and inſtead of imputing to him the higheſt excellence, may impute to him the deepeſt depravation : for if a *juſt* love be the moſt commendable of any thing in exiſtence, an evil love is the moſt cenſurable of any thing in ex-

iſtence

iſtence—indeed, is that alone in which all ſin conſiſts.

God is love in a ſenſe proper to pure ſpirit: love of this kind, is known by its objects; and ſometimes denotes the regard of a being for himſelf, and is denominated *ſelf-love*. This cannot be the character of the Firſt Cauſe, if he be perfect; for it does not refer to excellence; nor to exiſtence in general. Self-love is the love of one's ſelf only, and does not reſpect any diſtinctions of a moral nature; it is therefore unreaſonable and abſurd; and wholly contrary to moral perfection.

That God is not ſelf-love may be inferred from the exiſtence of creatures. In creating he gives: but does not receive. Creatures ariſe from nothing, and are only what they are made by the divine power and goodneſs; on which they entirely and conſtantly depend. Though worlds be formed in great order and beauty, and creatures exiſt, capable of knowing the Creator, and celebrating his praiſe; yet what addition is made to his riches by the

tribute of creatures? They and their offerings were produced by him—even the acknowledgment of his perfection, and the praiſes with which it is celebrated, are the immediate reſult of his own agency; ſo that they are no real profit to him. To merit this claim, perſons muſt give him ſomething which He did not produce, or to which He had not a previous right; but as no ſuch offering can be made to GOD, it is evident the exiſtence of creatures is an act of benevolence, and that the profit of their exiſtence is on their part, and conſequently that GOD is not ſelf-love.

Love is ſometimes uſed to denote the *complacency* of a perſon in particular characters, by which he is influenced to ſecure them from evil, and promote their happineſs. Complacency is not an original exerciſe, but implies the previous exiſtence of a ſubject of approbation: it is, therefore, of a ſecondary nature, and cannot be the *originating* cauſe: it is not, for inſtance, the cauſe of that on which its exerciſes are founded.

That

That the love of complacency is not the *characteriſtic* of the Firſt Cauſe, may be inferred from the exiſtence of evil. On the ſuppoſition that only this love belongs to God, the exiſtence of evil argues, either that he was deficient in wiſdom, or power, not to prevent what was wholly oppoſed to his exerciſes and deſigns: or that he is deficient in moral excellence; for how can a holy being have complacency in all things, when it is allowed that ſome of them are ſinful? If God be love, only in the ſenſe of complacency, the world would have been only good, that it might be a ſubject of his approbation; and in the exerciſe of ſuch a love he would have prevented affliction. But he permitted ſin to take place, and conſequently the experience of the greateſt affliction: and the influence of evil is an unanſwerable objection to the opinion that the love of complacency is the original character of the Firſt Cauſe.

Benevolence denotes *original* exiſtence, and is a juſt object of complacency. Nothing of a

moral

moral nature is antecedent to benevolence, or good will; benevolence implies only ſelf-exiſtence; but having exiſtence it will exert itſelf in producing the greateſt poſſible good. The word *love* is often uſed in ſcripture, to expreſs an exerciſe which has for its object the greateſt good: and which includes a complacency in what is excellent, and an hatred of what is evil; but which is ſuperior to both complacency and hatred particularly conſidered, as it has a general object, viz. the greateſt good*. This love may with propriety be denominated *diſintereſtedneſs*.

Benevolence, or diſintereſted love, though ſimple in an abſtract ſenſe, is complex in its operations,

* By COMPLACENCY and HATRED PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED, the author means, a contemplation of evil and good, as they excite approbation, or diſapprobation, which denotes a ſimple view of them: by a GENERAL OBJECT he means one which correſponds to the deſign of doing the greateſt good in whatever that may be found to conſiſt. If a perſon go abroad with the intention of doing the greateſt good, it cannot be ſaid that he has any particular object in view: whereas if he go out with an intention to approve of a good character, or to expreſs diſpleaſure at one that is evil, he has a particular object. GOD has not a particular, but a general object in view, viz. the greateſt good. Yet he can do no injuſtice either to the good, or evil, for his benevolence includes the ſtricteſt juſtice to both.

operations, and accounts for every ſubject and event in nature, it is particularly illuſtrated in the example of Chriſt, and from reaſon and the teſtimony of ſcripture, it muſt be conſidered the character of GOD.

On the principle of diſintereſted love we may account for the exiſtence of evil. Had the creation been only good, the love of GOD would have appeared chiefly in the light of complacency: the diſintereſted nature of it could not have been fully known, conſequently his *true* character would not have been fully manifeſted in his works, and it could not have been fully loved, or enjoyed by creatures. By the introduction of evil an opportunity was gained for the manifeſtation of it in the ſenſe of *diſapprobation*, as well as approbation, and an infinite variety of diſtinctions between good and evil reſulted, to illuſtrate the propriety of its exerciſes in each of theſe reſpects. To approve the good, and diſapprove the evil, is not different from *juſtice*, for this approbation and diſapprobation is the definition of

juſtice. In expreſſing the nature of his love it was, therefore, neceſſary that God ſhould adopt meaſures which complacency and diſapprobation, particularly conſidered, did not require, and could not ſuggeſt.

Benevolence cannot be ſeparated from complacency, and diſapprobation; for it includes them: the three exerciſes involve no contrariety, but may ſubſiſt together, and be mutually illuſtrated by the connexion. Yet benevolence may adopt forms in which its own nature ſhall be diſplayed; and it *will* adopt ſuch forms, it being neceſſary to its character.

Of this ſublime and moſt intereſting ſubject a perfect example is given in Jesus Christ. By providing, through Him, redemption for ſinners, God manifeſted benevolence, while at the ſame time he ſhowed an approbation of the good, and a diſapprobation of evil. Chriſt was the deareſt object of the *complacent* love of God: in reſigning him to death, that he might ſave the ſinful who were moſt oppoſed to his complacent love, he ſhowed that he was not

governed

governed by this love; but exerciſed diſintereſted affection.

In no way can we obtain a perfect idea of the divine character as diſintereſted, but from the expreſſion of love to thoſe entirely depraved. Love, expreſſed to ſuch characters, muſt be ſelf-moved, diſintereſted and ſupreme. That this love might be manifeſted, man was permitted to ſin, and Chriſt appeared in the world to make an atonement for ſin. The ſcriptures ſay, "In this was manifeſted the "love of GOD towards us, becauſe that GOD "ſent his only begotten ſon into the world, "that we might live through him. Herein "is love: not that we loved GOD; but that he "loved us, and ſent his ſon to be a propitiation "for our ſins." 1 John iv. 9, 10.

GOD is removed as far from pain, as from guilt. The clouds of adverſity and ſorrow roll infinitely beneath him; yet he conforms to appearances and events, that he may be known to creatures. There was nothing ſinful in Chriſt though he had our nature;

nor

nor mean in his character, though he was in a ſtate of poverty; nor cruel in his ſufferings, though he endured the croſs—he was truly divine; but as there was an occaſion for it, he diveſted himſelf of every *external* circumſtance of honor and happineſs, and became an object of the fulleſt diſpleaſure, that he might perfectly manifeſt diſintereſted love.

He was the "brightneſs of his Father's glo-"ry," yet he took on him the "form of a ſer-"vant," that he might be a *viſible* object of the diſpleaſure of God in the ſenſe of *ſuffering*, and of the diſpleaſure of men in the ſenſe of hatred—and the ſcene of the crucifixion was realized, that this diſpleaſure of Heaven and earth might be exemplified. In thoſe diſconſolate circumſtances, acquieſcing in the will of God, and praying for the men who had wickedly crucified him, he exhibited the divine benevolence in its true character, without a veil; and in a moral view, appeared himſelf divine—*indeed* the "brightneſs of his Fa-"ther's glory."

To

To illuſtrate the nature of the divine benevolence, as an eſſential exerciſe of that benevolence itſelf; and to give inſtruction and happineſs to intelligent creatures, was the deſign of the character of Chriſt, and is the nature of the Goſpel.

SECTION X.

The Goſpel the only perfect moral Syſtem, and the Belief of it neceſſary to Proſperity and Happineſs.

A SINGULAR and very perverſe ſentiment is ſuggeſted by *Paine*, that morality depends on the opinion of ſociety. Speaking of a doctrine of the goſpel, in reference to the heathen mythology and the character of Jupiter, he ſays, "the ſtory had nothing in it new, "wonderful, or *obſcene:* it was conformable "to the opinions that then prevailed among the "people, called Gentiles." Page 16, 17.

This opinion he corrects in a future page (134) by ſaying, "The practice of moral truth: "or in other words, a practical imitation of the

"moral

" moral goodneſs of GOD, is no other than our " acting towards each other, as he acts benign- " ly towards all."

In this definition he is deficient: for if GOD be the author of our exiſtence and of all our mercies, we do not *imitate* his goodneſs unleſs we conſider his character, and be devoted entirely to the will of *Him* on whom we are entirely dependent.

Morality, juſtly defined, is a regard to the law of GOD, as it expreſſes our duty to Him, to our fellow creatures and ourſelves; it implies a ſuitable diſpoſition and behaviour towards GOD, and all his works.

The goſpel is the only perfect moral ſyſtem, becauſe it is the only perfect repreſentation of the character of GOD, and of his laws, eſpecially as they relate to enemies; or ſinners.

With improper apprehenſions of GOD we cannot ſuitably love, or ſerve him: our exerciſes will reſpect, not him, but ſome imaginary being: and ignorant of his character, we cannot know, or obey his laws, for they are expreſ-

ſive

ſive of his character: or his diſpoſition, manifeſted to intelligent creatures, is an authoritative example to them, and the law of their exiſtence: for this reaſon our morality can be perfect, only in proportion to the perfection of our ideas of God.

To conceive of God ſimply as a *firſt cauſe*, is not a moral idea, and implies no duties.—Unleſs the character of this firſt cauſe be known, we ſhall be ignorant of exerciſes correſponding to it. It follows from the belief of a firſt cauſe, only that men muſt act; but how they ought to act can be determined only from the moral nature of that cauſe.

To believe that God is good, in the ſenſe of exerciſing complacency and beſtowing gifts, is not a proper ground of moral action: for it is evil in certain caſes to exerciſe complacency, and the beſtowment of gifts will interfere with the adminiſtration of juſtice. Only by conſidering the true character of God, or the nature of his benevolence can our love be perfect, and our morality ſincere and irreproachable.

Were

Were we to conſider GOD as diſintereſted love, and to imitate him, we ſhould approve of excellence, becauſe of its worth, and in proportion to its worth: we ſhould diſapprove of evil, becauſe it is evil, and in proportion to its vileneſs: every object and relation would be juſtly regarded: and while all our thoughts and actions, in a ſubſequent ſenſe were proper, they would be influenced by benevolence.

Nothing is more certain, than that, in a world where ſin abounds, and many offences ariſe, a love is neceſſary, beyond what is meant by complacency: a love which conſiſts in the exerciſe of good will—which is capable of originating acts of kindneſs, and of loading even an enemy with favours. Only the goſpel explains this love, and enjoins it as a law: only the goſpel, therefore, is ſuited to the ſtate of ſociety—is calculated to promote happineſs and peace in the world.

Other ſyſtems are deficient in their repreſentations of the divine character, and in that

love

love which they require for GOD and his works. Mankind in general have no knowledge of any love excepting self-love, and complacency, and they expreſs no other. Even many who profeſs to be chriſtians, ſhould have ideas of the divine benevolence above what often prevail among them, that their morality may be perfect: and their errors and diſorders are wholly owing to their not apprehending the nature of this benevolence*.

Were mankind, in general, to acknowledge the character of GOD as repreſented in the goſpel, and to imitate his benevolence, they would proſper: not only as exertions of benevolence are means of proſperity; but as ſuch exertions GOD would bleſs.

Benevolence implies, in the very exerciſe of it, a removal of many calamities. In this temper, war, and cruelty, and oppreſſion, and

* Theſe truths, eſpecially the diſintereſtedneſs of divine love, are well repreſented and illuſtrated, by that ſtudious and accurate and evangelical writer Rev. Dr. HOPKINS, in his Treatiſe on the NATURE OF HOLINESS, and in his SYSTEM OF DOCTRINES CONTAINED IN DIVINE REVELATION, as well as by other late writers, on the ſame firſt principles.

injury would ceaſe; and from the active and noble nature of benevolence, were the exerciſe of it general, the intereſts of ſociety would be in the beſt manner promoted; and the world would be rendered pleaſant and flouriſhing.

As all natural evils are the reſult of ſin; were the will of God thus to be "done on earth, as "it is in heaven," thoſe natural evils which are the judgment, rather than the immediate conſequence of tranſgreſſion, would be corrected; ſo that the external ſtate of mankind ſhould ſtrictly correſpond to the meekneſs and piety of their temper. Peſtilence and famine would no longer deſolate: even death would be diveſted of terror, and in a great meaſure of pain. Not only would natural evils be corrected; but bleſſings proportionably expreſſive of the divine favour would be conferred. Mankind would be peculiarly proſperous in their ſpiritual intereſts; would have communion with God, and enjoy the moral bleſſings of his favour: bleſſings of which the affluence of the world is only a ſhadow.

It is certain from the juſtice of GOD, that mankind do not ſuffer, excepting as ſinners: conſequently if they ſhould become holy, their ſufferings would ceaſe. A ſublime deſcription of their ſtate, when this ſhall be their prevailing character, is given in the lx. Chap. of the Prophecy of Iſaiah: "For braſs I will "bring gold; and for iron I will bring ſilver; "and for wood braſs; and for ſtones iron. "Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy land: "waſting nor deſtruction within thy borders; "but thou ſhalt call thy walls ſalvation, and "thy gates praiſe. The ſun ſhall no more be "thy light by day: neither for brightneſs "ſhall the moon give light unto thee; "but the LORD ſhall be unto thee an ever-"laſting light, and thy GOD thy glory."

CONCLUSION.

1. THERE is a deception under which the diſbeliever in divine Revelation labours: he concludes he diſapproves of it, becauſe it is inconſiſtent;

inconſiſtent; whereas it appears inconſiſtent, becauſe he diſapproves of it. To ſome perſons the goſpel is as hateful in its ſpirit, as in its outward circumſtances it is deſpicable: and with this prejudice and enmity it is impoſſible they ſhould ſee its conſiſtence and truth. The goſpel does not require a credulous temper; but one that is impartial is indiſpenſible.

The infidel perceives, that the difference between him and the chriſtian, conſiſts in their diſpoſitions: for this reaſon he imputes the faith of the chriſtian to prejudice; but if the goſpel be a true, and the only perfect repreſentation of God, the charge of prejudice reſts wholly on the infidel.

The goſpel deſcribes the heart which does not believe as an "evil heart." Heb. iii. 12. If the goſpel be not approved by you, it is not owing to your having a better underſtanding than other men; but ſome prejudice "lies at the bottom of thy heart, thine own heart," and induces you to reject it. Pride in pre-conceived opinions, and a regard to worldly honour: or

appetites

appetites which the goſpel does not approve, and a regard to worldly pleaſure: or diſinclination to truth from the diſtreſs of light, or a dread of its conſequences, has a prevailing influence with that perſon who rejects the goſpel. He argues not from reaſon and evidence, but from temper and habits: and while theſe are depraved, and he reſolves to argue from them, he cannot ſee the conſiſtence of the goſpel, though it is perfectly conſiſtent: nor its truth, though divinely true.

2. It is of importance, that the goſpel be diſtinguiſhed from ſubjects which do not belong to it, but with which it is ſometimes connected.

It has been ſaid that the goſpel is the offſpring of tyrannical ſyſtems of government, and that its influence is tyrannical and oppreſſive.

This opinion may and doubtleſs does reſult from a temper impatient of juſt reſtraints. There is in ſome perſons a ſenſe of liberty inconſiſtent with all government: eſpecially

with ſuch particular, and ſtrict, and perfect laws, as are implied in the moral government of Heaven. From this cauſe they may conclude that the goſpel originated from deſpotiſm, and is oppreſſive.

It is true the requirements of the Goſpel are extenſive and indiſpenſible. They are not however more extenſive than the nature which is the ſubject of them: nor more indiſpenſible than the obligations of that nature to perfection. If the mind may freely oppoſe thoſe requirements, it may freely obey them: it may be free in virtue, as well as in vice; and this is the only obedience which the goſpel enjoins. Becauſe ſome perſons feel its requirements to be compulſive, have they a right to ſay others feel them compulſive? What arrogance to make themſelves in an evil temper the ſtandard for all mankind!

The goſpel is full of repreſentations that a conſtrained obedience is not its object; but one that is voluntary. Faith is neceſſary to ſalvation, not as a condition only; but as a cha-

racter,

racter. For this reaſon a chriſtian is free: and the goſpel, inſtead of having any connexion with tyranny, or the leaſt tendency to reduce a creature of GOD to bondage, is of a contrary nature; bringing man into true and perfect liberty—making him what he ought to be.

II. But it is particularly neceſſary that the goſpel be diſtinguiſhed from the errors and cruelties of the Church of Rome.

There is an inexpreſſible difference between the Proteſtant and Papal Churches. Yet they are often confounded: and chriſtianity is deſpiſed and rejected, becauſe it has been miſrepreſented and abuſed. *Paine* aſſerts (page 100) "With reſpect to religious good, the re-
"formation by Luther, and others called Re-
"formers, might as well not have taken place.
"The mythology ſtill continued the ſame,
"and a multitude of national popes grew out
"of the downfal of the pope of chriſtendom."
—May it not with the ſame propriety be ſaid, that the revolution in favour of *Liberty* has done no good? and that a multitude of ty-

rants

rants in every country have ſucceeded the downfal of a national tyrant? The *Reformers* in either inſtance, have not carried their ſyſtem to perfection; but it is the tendency of one to exhibit true religion, as of the other to exhibit true liberty.

Notwithſtanding ſome errors and oppreſſions, and even perſecutions in Proteſtant churches; not to perceive that there is an eſſential diſtinction between them and the papal church argues groſs blindneſs, not to abſtract truth; but to example.

Owing to their not making this diſtinction, ſome perſons conclude the church is declining. *Paine* thought it probable, "when writing on "politics in America, that a revolution in the "ſyſtem of government would be followed by "a revolution in the ſyſtem of religion"—and "in the abolition of the national order of "prieſthood in France," he ſees "the wreck "of ſuperſtition, of compulſive articles of "faith," and of chriſtianity. But ſurely the man is in a dream! The church is ſecure.

Nothing

Nothing has yet taken place but what tends to relieve it from hypocriſy and corruption.— The influence of education is removed, falſe profeſſions are renounced, and papal errors, extenſively as they have ſpread in the world, are declining; but ſhall we from this infer, that chriſtianity is declining? Moſt abſurd were the concluſion! It is neceſſary to its ſucceſs that falſe profeſſors abjure the faith, and that every thing oppoſed to purity, to order and benevolence be diſtinguiſhed from the goſpel. When this fully takes place the churches ſhall appear in perfect beauty, and the character of Chriſt in divine glory.

III. It is to be remarked, that they by whom the goſpel is rejected, can propoſe no perfect ſyſtem of morality and religion.

Paine writes, "How different from chriſti-
"anity is the pure and ſimple profeſſion of
"Deiſm! The true Deiſt has but one Deity;
"and his religion conſiſts in contemplating
"the power, wiſdom and benignity of the De-
"ity in his works; and in endeavouring to
"imitate

"imitate him in every thing moral, ſcientifi-
"cal and mechanical."

In theſe expreſſions there is nothing ſufficiently definite to regulate our exerciſes in reference either to GOD, or men: and the rule itſelf is imperfect: The character of GOD is not fully known from nature, and therefore cannot be ſtrictly imitated: and the appearances of nature admit of various conſtructions, and therefore are not a certain rule for moral action. In what manner, for inſtance, ſhall we learn from nature the propriety of puniſhment? Shall we infer that it is to be inflicted only on the evil? But do we not find that in divine Providence it is inflicted on all men? In what manner ſhall we be relieved from a ſenſe of ſin, and the dread of deſtruction? Shall we conclude that GOD is merciful? But if we acknowledge his mercy, why ſhould we deny him as revealed by Jeſus Chriſt?

Thoſe arguments by which perſons would reject the goſpel, will lead to a rejection of all doctrines and principles neceſſary to true mo-

rality

rality and piety. Removing the grounds of the goſpel ſyſtem, the principles of all religion are deſtroyed: and the ſoul is left, at liberty indeed to follow its inclinations; but without inſtruction, without government, and without hope.

There is nothing more falſe than this pretenſion of the Deiſt, that he has found ſomething more certain and ſublime than chriſtianity. He rather reſembles a credulous navigator ſailing on an interminable ſea, who imagines that he deſcries land, and contemplates a country abounding with riches and every valuable production; but as he approaches the fancied ſhore finds he has been deceived by a cloud. Let us beware of this deception, and reſign proſpects which are known by wiſer men to be vapour and deluſion.

IV. It is of importance that we conſider the nature of ſubmiſſion to the goſpel, and the inducements to comply with the duty.

It may well be repeated that ſubmiſſion to the goſpel conſiſts in the approbation of the heart.

heart. An approbation, not the result of intereſt, of cuſtom, or neceſſity ; but expreſſive of choice. It is ſurpriſing that it has never occurred to ſome perſons, from the repreſentations of the goſpel, and the diſadvantageous circumſtances in which the profeſſion of it has, in many inſtances, been maintained, that the goſpel may be approved from *love* : and conſequently without any other intereſt in it, than as it is worthy of affection. This is the only temper of true ſubmiſſion : the only principle on which a juſt profeſſion can be founded.

The inducements to yield this ſubmiſſion are numerous : two of them, as connected with the work to which we have attended, it will be proper to conſider, viz. that the goſpel is *diſintereſted* and *benevolent*.

1. The goſpel is perfectly diſintereſted.—The duty of believing is enjoined upon all with the ſame authority, and its bleſſings are offered to all with the ſame ſincerity. The goſpel has no reſpect to Europeans, to Americans,

Turks,

Turks, or the inhabitants of any other part of the world, in their national or particular character. It is addreſſed to every creature: and its promiſe is every where the ſame, "He that believeth ſhall be ſaved." If the names Jew and Turk, were uſed by *Paine* to expreſs a *diſbelief* in the goſpel, it was ſimply ſaying, that they who do not believe the goſpel ſhall not be ſaved by it: and in this caſe there is no partiality to the Jew, or Turk; for were an American, or European to diſbelieve the goſpel, *he* would not be ſaved by it. To require that the latter ſhould believe, in order to be ſaved; but that the former ſhould be ſaved without faith, would evidently be partial: making in one inſtance the moral, and in the other the natural, or national character, the condition of ſalvation. The goſpel is impartial as it contemplates no national, or local diſtinctions; but preſcribes the ſame conditions, and on a compliance with them inſures the ſame bleſſings to all men.

2. The goſpel is likewiſe benevolent. It is the very nature of it, as has been conſidered, to manifeſt the divine character as *Benevolence*: when it has its proper influence on the mind it cauſes benevolence: and conſequently is productive of the greateſt proſperity and happineſs. *Paine*, in the gloomy view he took of the crucifixion, and in aſcribing cruelty to the idea that GOD appointed it, did not conſider that ſufferings are limited to creatures: and he was totally blind to that kind of benevolence which the ſufferings of that ſcene were adapted to diſplay. Benevolence of the higheſt kind appears in full luſtre over thoſe ſufferings, approving the innocent, diſapproving the guilty, with ſovereign power to ſave. This ſcene atteſts the truth of that paſſage of ſcripture "The "tender mercies of GOD are over, or *above* all "his works."

The goſpel is benevolent, as it naturally precludes deſpair, and excites hope. Deſpair reſults from an apprehenſion of the juſtice of

GOD.

God. Knowing that we have ſinned, and that God is juſt, we may conclude that we cannot be pardoned. But the goſpel reveals the mercy of God; and exhibits it as his ſupreme attribute. Fully believing this, the mind cannot deſpair.

v. We may obſerve, that they by whom the goſpel is rejected muſt ſuffer a ſevere puniſhment. If the goſpel be a true and perfect manifeſtation of the divine character, it conſiſtently threatens the ſevereſt evils to thoſe who diſbelieve; for in this exerciſe perſons diſown and renounce God in his true and perfect character, and muſt ſuffer the heavieſt puniſhments, not only as they incur the greateſt guilt, but abandon that mercy which alone can ſave them from ruin, or mitigate the agonies of it.

The guilt of rejecting the goſpel is aggravated in proportion to the advantages for knowing it with which a perſon has been favoured. The ſin is greater, therefore, in a Proteſtant, than in a Papal country: much

greater

greater in the perſon who has been inſtructed in the principles, and trained in the duties of the goſpel, than in one whoſe education in theſe reſpects has been neglected. This is an argument for reading with caution in this enlightened country, treatiſes againſt chriſtianity written by thoſe who have had very little acquaintance with it, and who therefore miſrepreſent it without remorſe, and prophane it without fear.

From a conſideration of the threatenings of the goſpel, ſome perſons take a pleaſure in whatever tends to weaken its authority; wiſhing to become infidels in their own defence. But ſuch a wiſh is evidently raſh and fooliſh: for if the goſpel be true the diſbelief of it does not alter its nature, or delay its accompliſhment: but in this caſe perſons by commencing infidels, meet deſtruction in order to avoid deſtruction. The only prudent line of conduct is, to believe the goſpel, and obey its requirements: in this way we ſhall eſcape its threatenings, and have an intereſt in its promiſes.

iſes. To lead us to this duty is the firſt deſign of thoſe threatenings. Thus the Apoſtle ſays, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we "perſuade men."

VI. A more important reflection cannot be made on the ſubject, than that faith is the gift of GOD.

A ſinful heart cannot perceive the beauty of moral excellence, more than with our bodily eyes we can percieve a ſpirit. One is naturally, the other morally impoſſible.

It is very evident that mankind, in general, have not that benevolence which is the temper of faith, and which is neceſſary to happineſs in the preſent and future ſtates. To ſanctify the heart is the work of GOD: and he hath promiſed to accompliſh it "in the day of his "power;" yet but few have any ſenſe of their dependence for this bleſſing—the higheſt that GOD can beſtow, or a creature receive.

Mankind in general appear perfectly willing that GOD ſhould continue forever at a remove

from them, and withhold the bleſſings of his redeeming love. May it be the language of our hearts, "Return, O Lord! how long? "Behold and viſit thy church, the true vine "which thy hand hath planted. Cauſe it to "proſper, and may its branches fill the world."

APPENDIX,

APPENDIX,

IN ANSWER TO

OF THE EXAMINERS EXAMINED.

THE author of this treatiſe is entitled to credit, for having refuted a number of errors in ſeveral replies to the *Age of Reaſon*. Thoſe errors were the reſult of ſuperficial reaſoning, or of prejudice; and have no connexion with the goſpel. If the publiſhers of them think differently, and that the occaſion is of importance, they will anſwer for themſelves. But in this reſpect, neither the conſcience of the preſent writer, nor propriety permits him to aſſume their place.

In attending to the exceptions of the Examiner, ſo far as his anſwer involves the eſſential principles of the goſpel, it will be neceſſary, in

many

many inſtances, only to refer the reader to what is written in the preceding treatiſe: for the Examiner has ſuggeſted but few new opinions, and has ſupported the opinions of *Thomas Paine* with but few new arguments: the more important of his opinions and arguments will be conſidered, and the leſs important ſhall be diſregarded; becauſe if the others be refuted, theſe fall of conſequence.

Only on this principle has the writer attempted to anſwer the piece of *Thomas Paine*. Many things unjuſt and inconſiſtent, which might have been noticed, were omitted. To give two, or three examples, Mr. *Paine* ſays (page 66) "It is only in the creation that all our i-
"deas and conceptions of a word of GOD can
"unite. The creation ſpeaketh an univerſal
"language, independently of human ſpeech,
"or human language, multiplied and various
"as they be. It is an ever-exiſting original
"which every man can read—it does not de-
"pend on the will of man, whether it ſhall be
"publiſhed or not; it publiſhes itſelf from one

"end

"end of the earth to the other—and reveals to "man all that is neceſſary for man to know of "God." Inconſiſtently with this he had remarked (page 8) that "a circumſtance which "had taken place in France, of the total aboli- "tion of the whole national order of prieſthood, "and of every thing appertaining to compulſive "ſyſtems of religion, and compulſive articles "of faith, had not only precipitated his inten- "tion (of publiſhing his thoughts on religion) "but rendered a work of this kind exceeding- "ly neceſſary; leſt, in the general wreck of "ſuperſtition, of falſe ſyſtems of government, "and of falſe theology, we loſe ſight of mor- "ality, of humanity, and of the theology that "is true."

If the creation *reveal to man all that is neceſſary* for man to know of God: if it ſpeak an univerſal language *independently of human ſpeech or human language*—and *publiſh itſelf* from one end of the earth to the other, then how uſeleſsly was *Paine* employed in writing his thoughts upon religion? And how abſurdly does he re-

preſent

preſent ſuch a work as *exceedingly neceſſary*, leſt we *loſe ſight of the theology that is true!*

He aſſerts (page 20) "A thing which eve-
"ry body is required to believe, requires that
"the proof and evidence of it ſhould be equal
"to all, and univerſal." It is plainly not rea-ſonable to require a perſon to believe without evidence: and when a thing is univerſally to be believed, it is neceſſary that the evidence be univerſal; but that the ſame evidence, or equal evidence is requiſite to all is not a juſt idea, for on this principle nothing paſt, or diſtant is to be credited. Evidence may reſult from various kinds of teſtimony, and it may be leſs full in certain caſes than it is in others, and yet be ſufficient to juſtify and demand the aſſent of the mind.

He repreſents "Parents of the chriſtian pro-
"feſſion, as aſhamed to tell their children any
"thing about the principles of their religion
"—as ſometimes inſtructing them in morals,
"and talking to them of the goodneſs of what
"they call Providence—but that the ſtory of

"the

"the death of the Son of God cannot be told "by a parent to a child." Page 197. In theſe remarks he ſhows that he has but little acquaintance with chriſtian parents, or that he does not regard truth in his repreſentations: for it is a matter of notoriety, that the death of Chriſt, "in the plain language of the ſtory," is one of the firſt doctrines taught by chriſtian parents to their children—is expreſſed in the catechiſms of children, in their verſes and prayers, and is more often repeated than any other religious or moral ſentiment.

Other inſtances of error and miſrepreſentation might have been pointed out; but it would have been tedious to conſider them. A number, however, will be brought into view, as they have been juſtified and defended by the *Examiner*: in connexion with which we ſhall conſider his own opinions, and the arguments by which they are ſupported.

In his introductory diſcourſe, the *Examiner* delivers his creed: in the 2d Art. of which he

profeſſes

profeſſes to believe " the unerring authority of " natural reaſon."

Reaſon, in one ſenſe, cannot err: for were it to err it would ceaſe to be reaſon. This is true, of reaſon abſtractively conſidered; but not of reaſon as a faculty in creatures. The word reaſon ſometimes denotes abſtract truth, of an original and immutable nature: and ſometimes that faculty in creatures by which they receive and compare ideas, and deduce concluſions which are ſuppoſed correſpondent to truth. Yet theſe two ſenſes of the term are uſed interchangeably and ſynonimouſly by the Examiner, and he defeats his own purpoſe by it, as he becomes an example of fallibility, and fills many parts of his work with confuſion.

If reaſon as a faculty in creatures be unerring, why do they who reject revelation, and follow only reaſon, differ on ſubjects important as any which they allow? The *Examiner* and Mr. *Paine* concur in the opinion, that the character of God is to be learned from nature.

" That

"That GOD is good," ſays the *Examiner*, "the whole creation proves." Yet Mr. *Hume*, one of the Philoſophers whom he commends, conſidered it unjuſt to argue from effects to cauſe, and on this principle denied that we could know GOD—and ſays expreſsly, "It is "unreaſonable to believe GOD to be infinitely "wiſe and good, while there is any evil or "diſorder in the univerſe." In a variety of inſtances it appears, that theſe *reaſoners* adopt principles not preciſely the ſame, but groſsly contradictory and inconſiſtent, and therefore natural reaſon is not an unerring guide.

The Examiner, in aſſerting the unerring authority of natural reaſon, exceeded the preſumption which he imputed to chriſtians.—No true chriſtians profeſs the infallibility of their rational faculties. They believe the ſcriptures to be an unerrring rule; becauſe they are reaſon in the abſtract: or the author of them is perfectly wiſe and good; but they conclude perſons may miſtake the ſcriptures, and pervert them; and to this miſtake and

perverſion, they impute the various opinions and denominations which appear under the profeſſion.

If the Examiner profeſs to believe "the "unerring authority of natural reaſon," while many who pretend to follow it differ in their opinions: then chriſtians may profeſs to believe the unerring authority of the ſcriptures, though many who pretend to follow them, entertain different opinions. In one caſe, reaſon in an abſtract ſenſe only, is unerring, or true reaſon: and in the other, the ſcriptures, in their natural and proper meaning, are unerring and conſiſtent.

In charging chriſtians with "rejecting rea- "ſon, and believing from ſuperſtition and bi- "gotry," which is a ſtrain of invective that runs through his work, the Examiner has groſsly miſrepreſented them. They believe the ſcriptures, becauſe with the evidence in their favour it is rational to believe them.— The ſcriptures are not a ſyſtem of reaſon in the

ſenſe

ſenſe of being invented by human reaſon; but they are a ſyſtem of reaſon, as with the internal evidence of their truth, and the external evidence in their ſupport, it is irrational not to believe them. Sentiments which reſt on the perſuaſion of the mind, independently of teſtimony, may well be ſuſpected: for they have often been found erroneous: and for a perſon to publiſh ſuch ſentiments and require the general belief of them, is bigotry and ſuperſtition. Deiſts pretend to appeal to reaſon; but have, in reality, no other ſupport than *arbitrary perſuaſion*, and therefore no other meaning to the appeal than their own reaſon: and the perſon who does not believe, not as reaſon dictates, but as they believe is cenſured by them as weak and abſurd, as not philoſophic, or enlightened, as bigoted and ſuperſtitious. Till they can produce a teſtimony that they are right, equal with that in the ſcriptures, they certainly themſelves lie open to the charge of bigotry, tyranny, and ſuperſtition.

"ADMITTING,"

"ADMITTING," ſays the Examiner, "that "the Bible contains the only doctrine by which "we can obtain ſalvation, and everlaſting life, "which of the numberleſs profeſſions that "have ſprung out of it are we to believe?" (Page 8.) The anſwer is, that ſalvation is to be obtained not by believing in any profeſſion, but by believing the ſcriptures, and fulfiling their requirements: and in doing this, a perſon will believe in every profeſſion, and regard them, ſo far as he thinks them an example of the ſcriptures.

IT has already been mentioned, in reference to the general remarks of Mr. *Paine* on perſecution, that the proteſtant churches are greatly diſtinguiſhed from the Roman church. But as the *Examiner* has undertaken to ſupport the charge of *Paine*, and has ſpecified ſeveral churches, let hiſtory witneſs the injuſtice of the following repreſentation (page 13) "The "Puritans who fled to this country for the ſake

"of

" of freedom of conſcience and religious liber-
" ty, were no ſooner ſettled than they diſco-
" vered the ſame illiberal perſecuting ſpirit
" which drove them hither, becoming as cor-
" rupt as any of the former churches." Soon after the ſettlement of this country, that ſeveral Quakers, who ought to have been protected, were deſtroyed, is an indiſputable and afflictive truth. How far the puritan *churches* were concerned in this act, it is not neceſſary to examine. Allowing them to have been the only perpetrators of it, to ſay *they were as corrupt as any of the former churches* is a groſs violation of candor and of truth. Conſidering the ſtate and example of the times, it is not ſurpriſing that they did not wholly renounce perſecution at once. That they did not is a juſt argument againſt their perfection (to which they never pretended) but is not an argument againſt their ſincerity in profeſſing freedom of conſcience and religious liberty, imperfectly as the beſt body of mankind underſtood them in that day.

Who can deny that acts of injuſtice, even the moſt barbarous cruelty have been perpetrated in *France*, ſince the Revolution of May 1793? But who will ſay the people of that country are not more free, nor in a better ſtate than under the moſt oppreſſive of their kings? Yet by a compariſon with theFrench Republic, the abuſes in the Puritan Churches, or in any churches of the Reformation, muſt be enormouſly aggravated.

The *Examiner* in declaring (page 14) "I "believe there is not a church in chriſtendom, "but would, if it could not convert, moſt "gladly deſtroy all its oppoſers, had it that "one and only eſſential article power," ſhows a ſpirit of prejudice and malevolence, which is exhibited in ſeveral other parts of his writings, and the nature of ſuch a ſpirit when accompanied with power all men know. To be more explicit that he would not heſitate to extirpate chriſtians had he power to do it, may

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be plainly inferred from a number of his expreſſions, though he is ſo inconſiſtent as to diſclaim the wiſh, and may not know that it lurks in his heart. That democratic figure, with the cap of liberty over her head and the implements of war, which he has borrowed from a hiſtory of the French Revolution, is a very ſingular frontiſpiece for a treatiſe on religious opinions. He ſays (page 60) "Even admit-
"ting that the mahometan religion owed its
"eſtabliſhment in a great meaſure to the ſword,
"that circumſtance can by no means abridge
"its merits. We expect that the government
"of the French Republic will be eſtabliſhed by
"the ſword; but it cannot from thence be in-
"ferred that it will not be equal, or ſuperior
"to any government on earth." If it do by no means abridge the merits of a religion to be eſtabliſhed by the ſword, what prevents his uſing the ſword to enforce it? The mahometan religion originated the war by which it was eſtabliſhed, and if this do not abridge its merits, the *Examiner* may conſiſtently uſe force to

propagate

propagate his ſyſtem of religion. His argument from the French Republic implies, that religion may call in the aid of war, as well as civil government.—The ſame ideas of violence are inſinuated in his affirming (page 12) that "the chriſtian ſyſtem has been the *cauſe* of "more evil in the world, than any other that "ever appeared in it:" and in his apoſtrophe reſpecting a writer in favor of chriſtianity; "Does he expect to ſtop the revolutionary "principles which are pervading almoſt all "parts of the globe? And can he wiſh to "continue thoſe religious prejudices which "have already deluged the world in blood?" (Page 78.)

That chriſtianity has been perverted, and that this perverſion has been the cauſe of war and oppreſſion, even in the ſevereſt ſenſe, no one will deny. But from this fact no argument ariſes againſt chriſtianity, more than againſt every thing good and important: the perverſion of reaſon has cauſed many errors and diſorders: the perverſion of power much

oppreſſion

oppreſſion and cruelty: the perverſion of wealth much diſhoneſty and corruption: the perverſion of liberty much licentiouſneſs and abuſe. Shall we, therefore, argue againſt reaſon, againſt government, againſt wealth, and liberty? Why, then, ſhall we argue againſt chriſtianity becauſe a perverſion of it has been injurious?

THE *Examiner* is not conſiſtent in cenſuring the chriſtian religion even if it were the *cauſe* of war: for if it can by no means abridge the merits of the *mahometan* religion to be eſtabliſhed by the ſword, why ſhould it abridge the merits of the chriſtian religion to be eſtabliſhed in the ſame way? For no religion can be more the immediate cauſe of a war than the mahometan of that war by which it was eſtabliſhed.

That chriſtianity has never *cauſed* war: and that it cannot produce any injury, muſt be evident from attending to its nature: and the

Examiner,

Examiner, notwithſtanding he ſpeaks much of its vindictive and horrid ſpirit, yet in other inſtances ſays that which tends wholly to exculpate it. Thus in ſpeaking of the cruelties of the Algerines to chriſtians, and of the general cruelties of chriſtians, he remarks (page 61) "Perhaps theſe acts of inhumanity cannot "be fairly juſtified from either of the ſources "on which theſe reſpective religions are founded; but as both conſider all who are not of "their way of thinking as enemies to GOD, it "is a *preſumption* that man, as his inſtrument, "has a right to avenge his cauſe."

On the whole of this ſubject the *Examiner* is evidently inconſiſtent. He cenſures chriſtianity for rendering its profeſſors ſubjects of evils, as well as for cauſing them to inflict evils—ſays (page 61) "He wiſhes to convince "chriſtians of the impolicy of foſtering pre-"judices, by means of which they have expe-"rienced ſo much contempt and cruelty, from "thoſe of an oppoſite perſuaſion." He allows ſomething in favor of chriſtianity when

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he can take advantage of it to exalt mahometaniſm, and injure chriſtianity—and then turning to chriſtianity he denies what he had granted and repreſents its principles as vindictive and cruel.

Page 15. After repreſenting a convert to chriſtianity as influenced by "terror," and the "wretched victim of the deſigns of the church," he remarks, "Theſe converts are ſeldom, or "never made by pure reaſon and ſound argu-"ment:" from which it appears that a convert may poſſibly be made by reaſon and argument.

Page 19. "From an attentive peruſal of "ſuch liberal and enlightened writers as Pope, "Locke, Hume, &c. who were not intereſted "in forcing any unnatural ſyſtem on mankind, "whoſe only aim was, the happineſs of the hu-"man race &c." As Locke profeſſed to believe chiſtianity, and wrote a commentary on part of the New-Teſtament; to ſay "he was not "intereſted in forcing any unnatural ſyſtem on "mankind, and whoſe only aim it was, to pro-

"mote

"mote the happineſs of the human race," is a candid conceſſion in favor of a chriſtian writer.

But one of the opponents of *Paine* having remarked, "That the moſt diſtinguiſhed ma-"thematicians and Philoſophers of our own "country, Bacon, Boyle, Newton, *Locke*, Bar-"row and Hartley, have been the firmeſt be-"lievers of the chriſtian revelation," the *Examiner*, in reply to this argument, makes no mention of Locke; but ſays, "The greateſt "philoſophers, and moſt virtuous of their coun-"try, Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Pope, Bolinbroke, "Hume, Franklin and Paine, have been the "firmeſt diſbelievers of the chriſtian revela-"tion"—(Page 46.) As he appears to have no great attachment to authorities, perhaps he may conſent to give up theſe on reflection: it is certain the greater part of them were not of the character he deſcribes.

Rouſſeau wrote ſometimes in favor of chriſtianity: and *his* is the ſentiment, that "for "twelve men to agree together, to forge ſuch

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"a character as that of Jesus Christ, is more "incredible than the existence of such a cha-"racter;" which shows that he was not a very firm disbeliever. Pope has left to the world several christian Odes, which we may presume he would not have written, or preserved among his works, had he firmly disbelieved the system: and he says, "In reading religious controversy, "he still found himself to agree with the last "author he perused."

Dr. Franklin, after his return from France, being requested to give his opinion of christianity, answered, that "he considered it a sys-"tem of truth, and that Jesus Christ was the "Mediator between God and man*." *Hume*, though a disbeliever in Revelation, does not appear to have believed in any thing; but as Doctor Beattie represents, "doubted even of doubts:" and he remarks, "I dine, I play a "game at back-gammon, I converse familiarly "with my friends; and when after three or

* Letter to Dr. Stiles.

" four hours amuſement I return to theſe ſpec-
" ulations, they appear ſo cold, ſo ſtrained and
" ſo ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart
" to enter into them any further."† Even the *Examiner*, there is reaſon to conjecture, has not a full perſuaſion at all times that chriſtianity is falſe. From the expreſſions, " Theſe
" converts are ſeldom, or never made by pure
" reaſon and ſound argument"—and, " Theſe
" acts of inhumanity cannot, perhaps, be fairly
" juſtified from either of the ſources," &c. It may be preſumed that the impreſſion of chriſtianity on his own mind is not uniformly unfriendly to its truth: and let him not deſpiſe the wiſh that he may be one of its rational converts.

With *Paine*, he objects to the mode in which ſin was introduced: and attempting to give an account from reaſon of its origin ſays (page 62, 63) " The greateſt difficulty that
" occurs is, to reconcile free agency with the
" preſcience of the Deity—and that Dr. Beat-
" tie,

† Treatiſe of Human Nature.

"tle, in his Eſſay on Truth, is perfectly ſatis-
"factory to him on this ſubject: who obſerves,
"It will be univerſally admitted that there are
"ſome things which the Deity cannot do: he
"cannot deceive: he cannot commit evil:
"theſe things are contrary to the nature of a
"juſt and holy Being, and therefore are im-
"poſſible. Neither is it more derogatory to
"the character of the Deity to ſay, there are
"ſome things which he cannot know: he has
"made man a free agent, and therefore can-
"not foreknow the actions he will commit:
"the one is inconſiſtent with the other."

This hypotheſis is not founded in reaſon: and is inconſiſtent with the divine perfection. It is admitted that GOD cannot perform contradictions: but to infer from this principle, that he cannot foreknow the actions of men, is not juſt, unleſs it be proved that ſuch a knowledge is inconſiſtent with human liberty. But if human liberty conſiſt in *volition*, without any reference to the cauſe of that vo-

lition,

lition, as a number of authors * have proved to the ſatisfaction of the preſent writer, then the preſcience of Deity is not inconſiſtent with human liberty: for it may be foreknown what actions creatures will perform, without deſtroying the freedom of them, provided their freedom depend on their being voluntary, and not on the cauſe of their being ſo. If it be conſiſtent with human liberty that God ſhould foreknow the actions of men, it is neceſſary that he foreknow them; becauſe it is neceſſary that an infinite Being have all the knowledge that is conſiſtent.

If God be ignorant in ſome inſtances of the actions which will take place, he muſt in all inſtances, if mankind be perfectly free: and this concluſion evidences the neceſſity of giving a definition of human liberty conſiſtent with foreknowledge. It is likewiſe neceſſary from the conſideration, that, if God be ignorant of actions which ſhall take place, he

cannot

* Particularly Dr. Stephen West, in his treatiſe on Moral Agency.

cannot render them ſubſervient to his purpoſes, or have any control of them.

The impoſſibility that God ſhould govern the world, were he thus ignorant, was perceived by the *Examiner*, and he exclaims—"What can man, that inſignificant ſpeck in "creation, do towards fruſtrating the great "plans of the Omnipotent!" But this ſpeck, inſignificant as it is, is the workmanſhip of God: and if diſregarded by him would be at leaſt a *ſpeck* to the diſhonour of his character and adminiſtration; of which the perfection and glory of that character and adminiſtration are infinitely incapable. The ſuppoſition is diſhonorary to God, and involves evils moſt afflictive to man. Says the *Examiner*, "He may, "if he happens to be a monarch, excite wars, "and thus occaſion the murder of millions of "his fellow-men. But can this affect the "ſchemes of the Almighty? Certainly not." But if "God is good, the whole creation "proves," be true, as the *Examiner* aſſerts, in what manner does his goodneſs appear, if

mankind may periſh without his regard, or any influence on his plans? And how deplorable is the ſtate of creatures, if evils may ariſe againſt which the Creator did not provide, and which are a ſubject of indifference in his government! The *Examiner* cenſures the ſcriptures as diſhonorary to GOD, and cruel to the human race: yet they aſſert, that "not a ſparrow falls without the divine knowledge," and that "the hairs of our head are all numbered." What might the *Examiner* with reaſon ſay of them, if they repreſented GOD as not regarding what kings deviſe, and nations ſuffer!

The *government* of the world is of equal importance to the perfection of the divine character, with the creation of it. That the neceſſity of one has not as ſtrong an impreſſion on the mind as the neceſſity of the other, is not owing to any real difference in the ſubjects; but to the greater eaſe of conceiving of power, than of moral excellence. It is as neceſſary to the moral attributes of GOD that he govern, as to his natural attributes that he

create.

create. He could not create the world without infinite power: and unleſs he govern it he is not infinitely excellent.

In connexion with the preceding article, the *Examiner* mentions the doctrine of *neceſſity*. But chriſtians admit of no neceſſity inconſiſtent with human liberty. They conſider liberty to be as neceſſary as any other ſubject: and it cannot be important to enter into an explanation of a doctrine repeatedly and largely diſcuſſed in the writings of chriſtians; eſpecially as it muſt be evident there is no ground of objection to the doctrine, when the neceſſity of liberty is conſidered as well as of other effects.

"That for the ſins of fathers their children, "whether innocent or *guilty*, ſhould ſuffer "puniſhment, is a principle" (ſays the *Examiner*, page 33) "contrary to reaſon, juſtice and "the laws of every well governed nation. It "is a maxim in moral policy, that it is better

"that

" that an hundred guilty ſhould eſcape, than " one innocent ſhould ſuffer; but according to " the foregoing doctrine an indiſcriminate pun- " iſhment falls alike upon the innocent and " the guilty."

In the beginning of this extract the reader will obſerve a caſe ſuppoſed in which the children may be *guilty*: why, then, does the *Examiner* not argue on this principle? Why does he cite the maxim, that " It is better an hun- " dred guilty ſhould eſcape, than one *innocent* " ſhould ſuffer?" Is he ſo attached to this phraſe that he muſt adduce it on every occaſion? Or are his prejudice againſt chriſtianity ſo great, that he cannot argue on the caſe of guilty children? The maxim he has brought is not oppoſed to the ſcripture doctrine; for the children are not puniſhed as innocent; yet if left to ſin in conſequence of the ſins of their parents, that their puniſhment is likewiſe a conſequence of the ſins of their parents, cannot with reaſon be denied.

There

There is a maxim in the *ſtate trials*, much more to the preſent purpoſe, that "To imitate "the virtuous is to be leſs virtuous; whereas "to imitate the vicious is to be more crimin-"al." There is ſuppoſed in virtue to be a beauty and advantage which naturally engage love and excite admiration, for which reaſon the greateſt ſhare of merit belongs to the perſon who firſt gives the example of virtue: but in vice there is ſuppoſed to be a deformity and wretchedneſs calculated to excite abhorrence and caution, and to practice vice after its nature is known, is to be more criminal. If children have an opportunity to obſerve the evil conduct of their parents: and from the nearneſs of their relation feel moſt ſeverely its diſadvantages, then in chooſing to imitate it they are peculiarly criminal, and may bear an enhanced puniſhment.

The example which the *Examiner* has adduced (page 69) of the deſtruction of Achan and his family, does not invalidate the truth

that

that children are not punished if innocent. The spoil was secreted in his tent, and the destruction of his family implies that they knew and approved of his conduct: or were of a temper to approve of it.

The *Examiner* represents the scriptures as contradictory, obscene, and rendering mankind vindictive and cruel.

In his vindication (page 27) he says, "Mr. "Wakefield seems to be confident that the "Jewish and Christian revelations are perfect-"ly consistent with each other—but if he will "take the trouble of reading David Levy's "answer to Dr. Priestly's letters to the Jews "he will find that they do not *quite* agree with "each other." That the writings of those two persons do not quite agree is very evident; but when the scriptures are substituted for wrong representations of them, they will be found an uniform and consistent scheme.

The particular examples of contradiction adduced by the *Examiner*, as that the "Lord

"repented,"

"repented," and yet "does not repent:" "God "is love," and "our God is a consuming "fire," &c. are explained in such a variety of commentators, that the writer thinks a perusal of them must be satisfactory to every candid mind. The *Examiner* shows a want of candor, and is extremely disingenuous in not admitting in those explanations the "spiritual as "well as literal meaning" (page 11). In a revelation of spiritual subjects, it is necessary from the nature of things, that an interpretation in some sense spiritual be adopted, so that there is perfect reason, as well as perfect truth in the expression of Christ, "The words that I speak "unto you, they are spirit and life." If the sense in which words are used to be indicated, there is no guile in the representation itself, nor in the construction of it in whatever sense it may require, whether literal, allegorical or spiritual.

There is, however, one instance impertinently left to Divines by Mr. *Paine*, which should still have been neglected, had not the *Examiner*

iner noticed the objection: it is the expreſſion 1 Sam. xviii. 10. "And an evil ſpirit from "GOD came upon Saul." This paſſage appears to have been adduced as an argument from ſcripture, not againſt the *omnipreſence* of GOD; but only againſt his holineſs. As GOD fills all ſpace, nothing can ſtrictly be ſaid to go to him, or come from him: thus the Pſalmiſt reaſons "Whither ſhall I go from thy preſence? "Whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? If "I aſcend into heaven, thou art there: if I make "my bed in hell, behold, thou art there!" Yet it is juſt, both from reaſon and ſcripture, to conſider the preſence of GOD in particular places, from the peculiar manifeſtation of it in thoſe places: thus it is ſaid that He "came "down" on Mount Sinai, and that "Moſes "went to him"—and any part of ſpace, or any ſyſtem of creation may denote his local preſence, and objects coming from that place, may be ſaid to come from him.

GOD is preſent in every place, not only in the ſenſe of exiſtence; but of government. It is

even

ever implied, in his being present with the evil, that he controls the evil : and in his being present with the good that he controls the good. It is inconsistent with his perfection to suppose, that he should be present with either, especially with the evil, without controling them : so that a wicked angel cannot leave the regions of darkness unless permitted by him, more than a holy angel can leave the mansions of light without his permission. Descending into hell, if we should there witness the presence of God, and if an evil spirit can do nothing without his permission, then one of them, in coming from that place to the part of creation in which Saul lived might be said to come from God ; and there is no immorality, or impropriety in the expression, as it implies only the universal presence of God and his universal government ; and the particular manifestation of that presence and government in places where creatures have existence :— considered in this light, the doctrine contained

in that paſſage of ſcripture is not only conſiſtent with the divine perfection, but neceſſary to it.

THE *Examiner* aſſerts (pages 24, 25) that "many parts of the Bible are highly indecent, "perfectly obſcene"—and that he "could "point out many paſſages which—if contained "in any other book, would baniſh it from "poliſhed ſociety."

In anſwer to this charge it is to be obſerved, that nature, juſtly conſidered, is not indelicate. If it were, the Author of nature would be an immoral being. Only improper ideas of nature are indelicate, ſuch as debaſe nature, and violate the order of ſociety, and excite the ſentiment of ſhame. But the ſcriptures do not ſpeak of nature but with a deſign to reprove the debaſement of it, and to maintain its order, and therefore the ſcriptures are not indelicate.

That a number of what are deemed indelicate words and phraſes are to be found in the

ſtyle

ſtyle of the ſcriptures is owing not to the truths they expreſs ; but to idioms of language, and the changes which take place in the manner of repreſenting truths ; and is a conſequence which muſt attend the moſt delicate writings in ſtrict tranſlations, and even the ſame writings when modes of ſpeech are altered. The term *offspring*, for inſtance, is common in the Engliſh language, and has never been conſidered indelicate ; yet it implies, and literally tranſlated might communicate to the people of another language, all the indelicacy imputed to any words, or expreſſions in the Bible. The charge of indelicacy, ſo far as it has any ſupport, lies on human ſociety, and is a reproof either to our fore-fathers in whoſe days the ſcripture phraſeology was written, or to their children who have abandoned a number of their modes of expreſſion. But it would not be a perverſion of divine revelation, if expreſſions, which cuſtom has rendered indelicate, were exchanged for thoſe which ſhould con-

vey the ſame inſtruction in the preſent phraſeology of ſociety.

Ideas of ſin are not ſin, unleſs attended with evil inclinations. If words neceſſary to cenſure a perverſion and debaſement of nature, and to condemn ſin, excite evil inclinations, it is owing to the ſtate of the reader's heart, and is an abuſe of ſcripture in a ſenſe in which it is evidently pure and moral. Frequently in reading the ſcriptures perſons are affected only by thoſe parts of an expreſſion which ſuit their evil inclinations, and make even the cenſures of ſin an occaſion of ſin. But the danger of ſuch an abuſe is neceſſary to the preſervation of order and purity.

The *Examiner*, in charging the ſcriptures with indelicacy, has given this implicit teſtimony of the indelicacy of his own heart: and he has more plainly expreſſed it in ſtiling the conduct of Ham "a trifling and childiſh fault; "which, if it can be called a crime, deſerved "—— nothing more than a gentle reprimand",

(page

(page 64). Such a writer, in condemning the ſcriptures as indelicate, muſt add *impudence* to indelicacy—a connexion not uncommon.

He cenſures the Scriptures, in ſeveral places, as expreſſing and exciting a vindictive ſpirit. But this charge is founded on falſe, and imaginary principles. The conduct of Moſes is as liable to an exception of this kind as any example in ſcripture: and the deſtruction of the Canaanites by him, or in conſequence of his order, is almoſt ever one of the themes of declamatory abuſe. But has not God a right to deſtroy the ſinful? may he not cut them off by the ſword, as well as by ſickneſs, or famine? If the Iſraelites were attended with miraculous tokens, was it not evident that God had commiſſioned them to deſtroy his enemies? And does not their being attended with miraculous tokens, ſecure their example from being perverted to the purpoſes of revenge and fanaticiſm? No one believes that the Iſraelites were

commiſſioned to deſtroy the Canaanites without believing the miraculous tokens of the preſence of God: no one, therefore, can pretend to that commiſſion, unleſs ſupported by the ſame teſtimonies. If the account, taken collectively, cannot produce any immoral, or injurious conduct, why ſhould it be cenſured if, taken in ſeparate parts, an injurious inference may be deduced from it? But it is ſaid, the account itſelf is vindictive and inhuman—Not as an execution of the vengeance of God—He certainly did not puniſh the Cannaanites beyond their guilt.

"We find in the ſcriptures," ſays the *Examiner* (page 32) "that when Jeſus ſent out "his diſciples to preach the Goſpel to the "world, he gave them power to raiſe the dead, "heal the ſick, caſt out devils and cure the "blind, deaf and dumb, to convince mankind "of the truth of their doctrine. But we ſee "nothing of the kind in the miniſters of the

"Goſpel

"Goſpel (at this day) to prove their divine "miſſion, though in the Bible the doctrine "with its proofs are related as inſeparably con-"nected." Chriſt, after his reſurrection, inſtituted the miniſtry of his word, and repreſented that it ſhould be perpetual; but he did not ſay that miraculous gifts ſhould be perpetual: to aſſert that they are "related as inſeparably "connected" is falſe. The reader is referred to Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, and Mark xvi. 15—19: from which he will perceive that "inſeparably "connected" is a much ſtronger expreſſion than is uſed even by Mark.

THE *Examiner* attempts in a variety of inſtances to ſupport the aſſertion of *Paine*, that the morality of the goſpel has been equalled, or exceeded by a number whom chriſtians call heathen: and ſays (page 60) that the "Ma-"hometan eſtabliſhment was undoubtedly a "very great improvement on the Jewiſh and "Chriſtian ſyſtems."

That

That heathen philoſophers delivered a number of moral precepts no one will diſpute. But that they had no ſyſtem of morals equal with that of the Goſpel will appear, we truſt, from the *Section* on the Morality of the goſpel: and it may be proved by the conſideration, that the preſent advocates of thoſe Philoſophers have not a ſyſtem of morality equal with that of the goſpel, witneſs the *creeds* of *Thomas Paine*, and the *Examiner*.

To ſhew the ſuperiority of the Mahometan to the Chriſtian ſyſtem, he has introduced a long quotation, as diſagreeable as the pedantry and quaintneſs of *Gilbert Wakefield*, and as obſcure as the writings of the Myſtics. It is however plain, that he intended it as a proof of the ſuperior excellence of the Mahometan Religion. But on the much better authority of the learned and elegant Doctor *Watſon*, it appears that the Mahometans "derived all that "is good in their Koran from Chriſtianity.*"

Indeed

* Letters to Gibbon, page 123.

Indeed it is generally known, that it was the deſign of Mahomet to unite in his ſyſtem Jews and Idolators and Chriſtians: and in conformity with this deſign that the Koran is compoſed partly of pagan errors, and partly of the ſcriptures of the Jews and Chriſtians, delivered under the pretext of a new revelation. Chriſtians do not think that pagan errors, or the abrogated rites of the law of Moſes would be of any advantage to the Goſpel. But if the *Examiner* is of a different opinion, he certainly need not abandon his *country* to beſtow praiſes on mahometaniſm.

Thoſe principles of the Goſpel which the *Examiner* ſtiles *ſpeculative*, are of importance, to true morality. If the *pardon* of ſin be abuſed to licentiouſneſs, the doctrine is neceſſary to encouragement in the practice of virtue. If no offence could be pardoned, the perſon who had once tranſgreſſed would be diſcouraged from any attempt to comply with his duty, and would be abandoned to deſpair. The ſame

may

may be ſaid of the doctrine of *faith*. Theſe evangelical principles have a very important influence on our practice as it relates to God and our fellow-men, and the *Examiner* was very erroneous in calling them *ſpeculative*, and in conceiving that "there can be neither virtue "nor vice, in believing or diſbelieving" them.

Page 52, ſpeaking of the ſcripture doctrine of human depravity, as repreſented by Miniſters, he ſays, "We have been taught to believe "that mankind were by nature depraved, at "enmity with God and one another, and if it "were in their power would hurl the Omni-"potent from his throne. How ungenerous, "how wicked the deception!" Yet he ſays (page 68) "It would be difficult to calculate "all the *improvements in divine knowledge* that "have been made from the days of Adam to "the preſent time. So various and contradic-"tory have been the inventions of mankind "on the ſubject": "They have annihilated

"the

"the Supreme Being as much as was in their "power :" What! Mr. *Examiner*, call it an ungenerous and wicked deception in chriſtians to repreſent mankind as "wiſhing to hurl the "Omnipotent from his throne," and yet ſay yourſelf, that "mankind have annihilated him "as much as was in their power!" Blind, indeed, to his own character is the perſon who indulges prejudices which have *no* diſguiſe!

THE *Examiner* (page 16) conſiders it "the "peculiarly honorable lot of *Thomas Paine*— "to open the door to free and impartial in- "quiry :" and ſays, "he has taught the world "that no true ſyſtem of principles is too awful "to be canvaſſed by reaſon: or too ſublime "to be comprehended by common ſenſe."— If chriſtianity be a true ſyſtem, is it not too awful to be treated as *Paine* has treated it, miſrepreſenting and villifying it in almoſt every part! Is this opening the door to "im- "partial inquiry," canvaſſing principles "by

"reaſon,"

"reaſon," and bringing a ſublime ſubject within the "comprehenſion of common ſenſe?" —Rather, if chriſtianity be true, has he not much to repent of, or much to ſuffer!

SHOULD the *Examiner* undertake a reply to this performance he is requeſted to give an example of greater candor and juſtice than in the following inſtances, viz.

1. "Why ſhould deiſm be the conſtant theme "of abuſe for *bigots* of all other perſuaſions?" (page 83). By bigots he appears to mean *believers* of other perſuaſions: and there are few writers who expreſs more abuſe of this kind. He conſiders believers in the goſpel, eſpecially miniſters, to be "inſpired with the moſt "vindictive and cruel hatred"—"prohibit-"ing inquiry for the detection of falſhood"— "hypocritical bigots, upholding arts by the "powers of ſuperſtition and the prejudices of "education." Theſe calumnies lie within the compaſs of a few pages of his work: and it is

very

very generally diſtinguiſhed for ſcandalous inſinuations and charges.

If the writer of the preſent treatiſe have uſed any expreſſions which may be thought harſh: or made any aſſertions which may be thought bigoted, he here diſclaims the motive of malice, or revenge. Perſuaded that chriſtianity is true, he has aimed to treat it as true, and ſhould conſider himſelf to blame not to manifeſt *zeal* on a ſubject of infinite importance in itſelf, and of everlaſting conſequence to mankind. The ſame apology may doubtleſs be adopted by miniſters and chriſtians in general.

2. Of the doctrine of the Trinity the *Layman* had ſaid, "The manner in which the Three "are One, or the One is Three, is ſtill a myſ-"tery, for it is not known, and perhaps never "will be. But we know as much as is neceſ-"ſary for us to know, and have therefore no "buſineſs to puſh our inquiries further:" to which the *Examiner* replies (page 66) "This "is the *dernier* reſort of the devotees to ſyſtems

"indefenſible by reaſon—they ſhroud them-
"ſelves in a cloud of myſtery, and exclaim,
"Far hence! far hence, ye prophane! The
"ground whereon ye tread is holy—here lie
"the ſecrets of the trade," &c. In this reply he is neither candid nor decent. The Layman does not appear to wiſh any one further from a knowledge of the doctrine than himſelf, or than is neceſſary. He confeſſes his own ignorance, and wiſhes to reſtrain inquiry, not from any ſecrets in his own mind, but from the unſearchable myſteries with which GOD is ſurrounded.

3. The New-York Reviewer had remarked, "The preſent period of revolutions has given "birth to a book called the "Age of Reaſon." "However remarkable the age may be for the "reaſon of nations, or individuals, Mr. *Paine*'s "head is certainly turned, and with him the "preſent age is the age of inſanity." Here is an implicit acknowledgment the preſent age is remarkable for reaſon in nations and indi-

viduals:

viduals: yet the *Examiner* replies (page 71) "When degraded man is reaſſuming his place "in the ſcale of exiſtence and prejudices are "vaniſhing before the eye of reaſon, to call "this the age of inſanity betrays a want of "diſcernment, or a deſign to miſlead."— In this reply the *Examiner* has ſubſtituted *Thomas Paine*, or the book written by him, for the preſent age of the world, and has therefore himſelf ſhewn "a want of diſcernment," or a "deſign to miſlead."

4. Animadverting on the commentary of the Layman, on Moſes' account of the fall, he ſays (page 61) "Here we think he has in-"jured his cauſe by attempting to elucidate "this myſterious ſubject. People were in the "habit of reading the ſtory in the allegorical, "bible ſtyle, without attending to its abſurdi-"ties." The bible account of the fall is not generally conſidered by chriſtians allegorical: *Paine* conſidered it in a *literal* ſenſe: it is therefore very diſengenuous in the *Examiner*

to insinuate that the Layman was new in treating it as literal, especially as it was repeatedly placed in this light by Mr. *Paine*.

He says, "the sun of reason has begun to "appear"—that "knowledge is spread abroad "—the shackles of superstition are broken," and that he expects "the gradual rise of de- "ism on the ruin of the christian system," and advises "all sectaries to prepare their minds "for this event." Deluded *worm*! Do you not know that the system you attack has survived the power and policy of the world to extirpate it? If you see no *internal* evidence that God is its support, at least give so much credit to history as to believe, that it cannot be overturned by any power that can now be brought against it, and that "it doth not become him "who putteth on the harness to boast like him "who putteth it off."

Mankind have become enlightened as they understand the nature of liberty and civil go-

vernment

vernment better than in former ages: they are enlightened as they better underſtand impoſition in religious as well as civil ſubjects; but that ſpirit of infidelity which oppoſes the true principles of the goſpel, is no part of the light of the preſent day, but deluſion and darkneſs, and ſhall itſelf vaniſh before the light.

Infidelity is calculated to detect ſome kinds of hypocriſy, and may overthrow an oppreſſive religion: the Church of Rome may fall before it—that is doomed to deſtruction. Accurſed church! Parent of cruelty! Mother of abominations! Not only deſtroying thine own children, and perſecuting the ſaints, but prejudicing the reſt of mankind againſt genuine Chriſtianity that bright example of ſupreme juſtice and moſt compaſſionate love! Bleſſed be GOD, thy overthrow is certain and not far diſtant. But true chriſtians ſhall mantain their profeſſion, and their intereſt ſhall proſper. The cauſe of Chriſt is defended by the perpe-

tual care and irreſiſtible power of GOD; and from his gracious promiſes mankind may expect its prevalence in the world: they ſhall become virtuous as well as free, enjoying a long relief from the priſon-ſhip and the baſtile, as inſtruments of civil tyranny; and from ſuch religious ſyſtems as the Papal Hierarchy and the "*Age of Reaſon* vindicated by the *Exam-*"*iners Examined*," as inſtruments of the tyranny of *ſin*.

PRESUMING it may gratify the Reader to see a ſummary of the doctrines maintained in the preceding treatiſe, the Author follows the example of *Paine* and the *Examiner* in delivering his

CREED:

1. *I believe there is One* GOD *in Three Perſons, ſelf exiſtent, and infinite in perfection.*

2. *I believe that good and evil are under the control of* GOD, *and were deſigned to manifeſt his character, which is eſſentially* Benevolence.

3. *I believe that* GOD *has no reſpect to perſons: that the ſame laws and terms of ſalvation are preſcribed to all men: and that "he who be-" lieveth ſhall be ſaved."—Conſiſtently with this I believe that faith is " the gift of* GOD."

4. *I believe that mankind, as children of the firſt Adam, are totally dep-*

exercises ; but that faith in Christ, as it implies an approbation of the divine benevolence, and a wish to imitate it, is true virtue and leads to the highest perfection in holiness and happiness.

5. *I believe that the person who exercises the christian faith shall be defended from all evil : and though, from infirmity, he cannot fully "do "the things he would," that he shall be pardoned through the atonement of Christ, and enjoy salvation :— while the person who neglects the duty, and refuses to be governed by the spirit of christianity, though prevented in the providence of* God *from committing any essential injury, shall yet be sentenced to everlasting punishment, as an enemy to* God *and the Universe.*

6. *I believe that the government of* God *in these respects, will be exhibited and confirmed by the resurrection of the dead, and in the day of general and final judgment.*

To these articles the writer has prefixed his name and trusts he shall be willing to attend [illegible] ever scenes of disgrace and affliction

affliction they may lead him. Only in these doctrines is he perſuaded of the perfection of GOD, and not only is his own ſafety and that of the church inſured; but the ſenſe of both may well be loſt when compared with the vindication of the divine glory.

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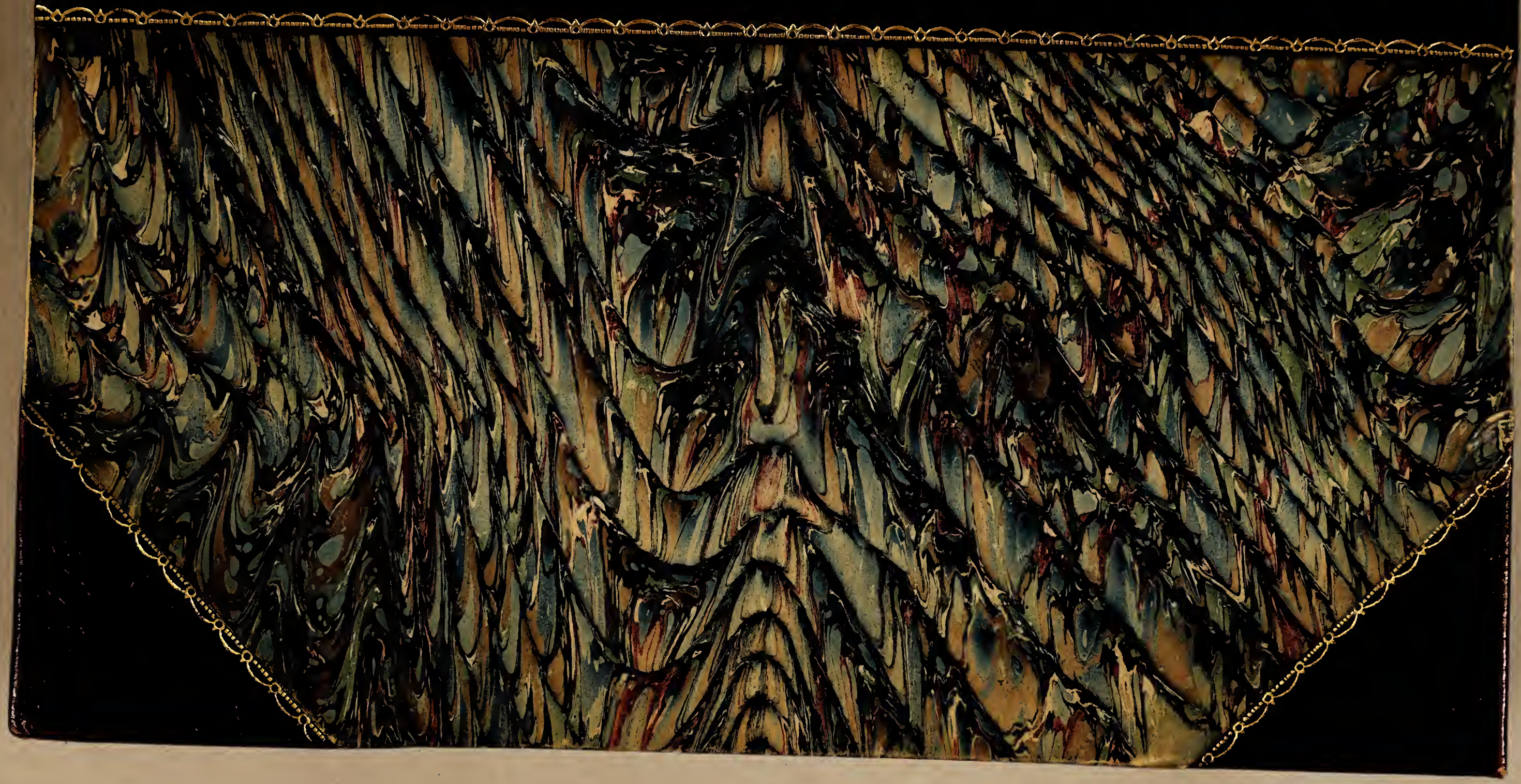
ERRATA.

Page	7,	line	17, for enlighted read enlightened.
	9,	——	14, — as —— if.
	16,	——	3, dele the.
	18,	——	4, for purpoſes read purpoſe.
	20,	——	21, — cauſe —— caſe.
	22,	——	23, — writers —— writer.
	33,	——	1, after names inſert, and the teſtimony of ſucceeding writers to their authenticity.
	100,	——	17, for evil and good, read good and evil.
	115,	——	dele 11.

☞ THE diſtance of the Author from the preſs, it is hoped, will excuſe to the Public the above Errors, and a few others which do not affect the ſenſe.

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